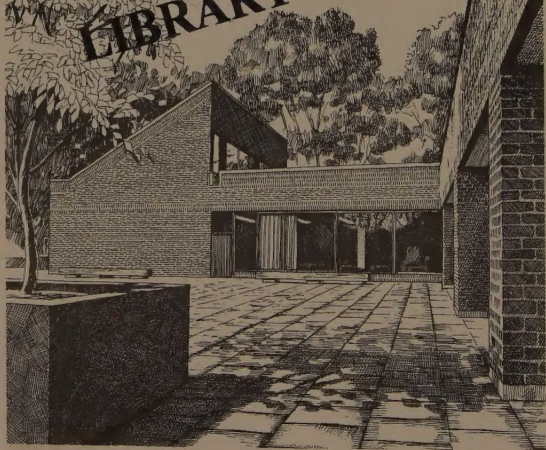


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GARLAND PUBLISHING

THE NEW FICTION AND OTHER PAPERS



The Philistine
(J. A. Spender)

Garland Publishing, Inc., New York & London



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THE NEW FICTION

(*A PROTEST AGAINST SEX-MANIA*),

AND OTHER PAPERS.

By THE PHILISTINE.

See ! the wild Maenads
Break from the wood,
Youth and Iacchus
Maddening their blood.
See ! through the quiet land
Rioting they pass—
Fling the fresh heaps about,
Trample the grass.
Tear from the rifled hedge
Garlands, their prize ;
Fill with their sports the field,
Fill with their cries. . . .

[Critic], what ails thee, then?
Say, why so mute ?
Tempt not the bright new age ?
Shines not its stream ?
Sculptors like Phidias,
Raphaels in shoals,
Poets like Shakespeare—
Beautiful souls !
See, on their glowing cheeks
Heavenly the flush !
—*Ah, so the silence was !*
So was the hush !

Matthew Arnold : "The New Age."

LONDON :

"WESTMINSTER GAZETTE" OFFICE,

1895.

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INTRODUCTION.

The first of the series of articles here reprinted was published in THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE in March, 1893; the two others during the first three months of the present year. Though the first series was thus divided from the second and third by an interval of two years, there is nevertheless a connecting thread between all three. For, taken together, they are an endeavour to examine certain assumptions which have affected art, literature, and criticism during these last few years, and which, though applied with a difference by painters, writers, and critics to their various spheres, have at least a very striking resemblance to each other.

The "new art," which was the first in order of time, proceeded first of all on the assumption:—

(1) That the subject of a picture was unimportant, and the handling all-important. From this it followed:—

(2) That painting and the appreciation of painting was a matter for experts and them only. No one else could understand whether the paint was put on ill or well.

(3) That the picture which conveyed a meaning or a moral to the ordinary public, and especially the picture which told a story, was self-condemned. For art was debased when it was used to kindle emotions other than the emotions of a painter at the skilful use of paint.

(4) Above all, art had nothing to do with morality, nor with popular conceptions of beauty. The artist was a law unto himself; it was for him to choose what he would paint, and to choose with sole reference to one point, viz., whether the subject would lend itself to a painter-like use of the material.

The result of these principles as seen in the exhibitions of the "new" artists was to produce a large number of works which certainly were unintelligible to the public, and of which the subject was generally trivial, and occasionally vulgar or repulsive. At the same

time a band of critics declared that these were works of superlative interest ; that in England at all events paint had never been used in so exquisite a fashion ; and that beside these productions, everything else was dull, vapid, anecdotic, academic—the last two epithets having a special vituperative significance among the “ new critics.” When anyone suggested that a painter should have ideas and thoughts besides a technical skill in manipulating paint, or that he should use his brush for appealing to the public, kindling their emotions or impressing them in any way, he was met either with a passionate denial that “ art ” had any such vocation, or with a condescending pity for his Philistine ignorance. Art was for an aristocracy of experts, before whose admiring gaze the artist pirouetted on paper (the new definition of drawing) or exhibited his powers as a virtuoso in paint.

The “ new ” artists were accordingly praised by their critics in language which a Philistine (according to the above definition) might have thought extravagant if applied to the greatest of old masters. These young painters were the first who saw things as they really are, and had the courage to paint them as they saw them. They alone were free from convention ; all others were “ tradesmen,” who pandered to the common ideas of what was saleable and pretty.

The next stage was to apply these principles to literature. A band of critics now began to assert that literature was only for the very few—the elect, the aristocracy ; that here also the subject was unimportant and the manner everything ; that the true genius dealt in art for art’s sake ; and, above all, that he had nothing to do with morality. Just as the “ new ” artists despised the picture that touched, the picture that taught, and the picture that pleased, so did the “ new ” writers profess to despise “ the common affections,” the “ common sentimentality,” and the “ common morality.” This led naturally in two directions. In the first place, there appeared a vast deal of “ purple and gold stuff ” in prose and verse which was immediately hailed as comparable to the greatest things in literature, but which seemed to the Philistine to say little or nothing, with a ruinous expenditure of precious words. This was “ art for art’s sake.” In the second place, the maxim that art has nothing to do with

morality was extended to mean that "art has a positive preference for the immoral," as ordinary people understand that word. So the word "art" had now acquired a new and (to Philistine noses) a most unsavoury significance. When a book was praised as "art," the Philistine gradually learnt to expect something that had a special eminence in nastiness. These alone, he was now told, represented things "as they really were." When the "new" artists had said that, he had looked for something unusually ugly; when the "new" writers said it, he had to look for something unusually nasty.

There is yet a further resemblance between the "new" art criticism and the "new" literary criticism. In both cases the "old" critics have been more or less captured. The constantly reiterated assertion that this was the only "art," and that no one with a reputation for taste or knowledge could possibly deny it, has had its effect. A morbid fear of seeming old-fashioned or out-of-date appears to have led many who are indifferent or positively hostile to join the chorus which welcomes these things as a modern revelation. The most advanced of the "new" sexual fiction is extravagantly praised by newspapers whose approval is the sign-manual of respectability. The review is so written as to leave the reader absolutely in the dark as to what the book is about; the grossest offences against good taste are passed with impunity, while the reviewer is eloquent about the "art," the "tenderness," and the "truthfulness" of some outrageous work.

In these circumstances, the Philistines must take heart and speak up for themselves. The only remedy is the assertion of the average opinion, which heartily dislikes these things, by whatever sophistical names they are called. In literature, as in art, they are no doubt passing phases, but if the average opinion is silent, or finds no method of asserting itself, they may take an intolerable time passing. The object of the following articles is, not to argue with literary and superior people, and still less to impugn the cleverness of the works mentioned, but to encourage ordinary men and women to say what they think, and not be ashamed of thinking it. So may we help to secure that the language both of literature and painting shall be

Fit and fair and simple and sufficient.

J. A. S.

PART I.

THE NEW ART CRITICISM.

A PHILISTINE'S REMONSTRANCE.

With Replies and Criticisms from "D. S. M.," Mr. Harry Quilter, Mr. W. B. Richmond, A.R.A., Mr. Walter Crane, and others.

THE NEW ART CRITICISM.

(MARCH, 1893.)

We (and I am one) who count ourselves ordinary people have stood a good deal in times past from the superior person, and especially from the superior critic. But even the worm will turn; and I confess that for me the turning-point seemed to have come when I read the following in the art criticism of the *Spectator* the other day *à propos* of an Exhibition at the Grafton Gallery:—

But "L'Absinthe," by Degas, is the inexhaustible picture, the one that draws you back, and back again. It sets a standard by which too many of the would-be "decorative" inventions in the exhibition are cruelly judged. It is what they call "a repulsive subject," two rather sodden people drinking in a café. . . . M. Degas understands his people absolutely; there is no false note of an imposing and blundering sentiment, but exactly as a man with a just eye and comprehending mind and power of speech could set up that scene for us in the fit words, whose mysterious relations of idea and sound should affect us as beauty, so does this master of character, of form, of colour, watch till the café table-tops and the mirror and the water-bottle and the drinks and the features yield up to him their mysterious affecting note. The subject, if you like, was repulsive as you would have seen it, *before Degas made it his*. If it appears so still, you may make up your mind that the confusion and affliction from which you suffer are incurable.

How strange, one thinks, that our old friend the *Spectator*, so moral and so reputable in all other relations of life, should lend itself to this rhapsody over a picture of "two rather sodden people drinking in a café"! Critics have in times past talked a great deal of nonsense about pictures that in spite of it all remain classic and beautiful; but is there anything in the whole literature of the subject quite to touch this about the "mysterious affecting note" of table-tops, mirrors, water-bottles, and drinks?

"It Sets a Standard."

"It sets a standard." That is really the point, but for which we might be content to let alone the affecting artistic qualities of table-

tops and drinks. But "it sets a standard"—a standard, apparently, of beauty, of decorativeness, of skill. And that, we must suppose, is the last word of "the new criticism." For the "new critics" are in possession of most of the weekly and several of the daily papers, and with one accord they tell us the same thing. These two sodden people are their ideal; it is for this that the world has been waiting; and if you refuse to hail it as a joy for ever, your affliction is incurable.

The New Maxims.

The wise have warned us not to dispute about matters of taste, and within certain limits it is a counsel of prudence. But when a new critic comes forward to set up a new standard and commends what the world has hitherto called repulsive as a sort of touchstone of the beautiful, we are entitled to ask for his credentials. D. S. M. has written under his own initials in the *Spectator* for the last two years, and it is bare justice to say that he often writes with ability and skill. He is not a critic so much as an advocate—the frankly partisan advocate of the young English imitators of French impressionists who call themselves the New English Art Club. There is no deception about it. "Academic" is, in D. S. M.'s vocabulary, a term of derision; hardly anything worse can be said of a man than to insinuate that he is an R.A., or might some day desire to become one. Secondly, it is, in D. S. M.'s opinion, a presumption against a picture that it makes its appeal (like a Raphael, a Velasquez, or a Reynolds) to people of ordinary understanding. "To protest against the populace being supplied with food convenient," he writes, "would be churlish; to protest against the tradesmen who supply it would be futile," and so the "tradesmen" are dismissed. Another maxim seems to be that the subject is nothing; the use of paint, the handling, everything. Then, again, the painter is apparently under no obligation to make his subject resemble in paint what it seems to ordinary people to be in life. Speaking of certain Glasgow painters, he says:—

Messrs. Henry and Hornel give us pastorals from Ayrshire, but they are also pastorals from Wonderland. That is what the puzzled citizen means when he says:—"Those cows are like cows out of a Noah's Ark." Of course they are. The cows of a Noah's Ark have more of the stuff of

art in them than the cows of Mr. Sidney Cooper. They are a trifle arrested in their forms, a thought too crude in colour: but they are unmistakable cows, and gay, to boot; they leave out the dulness which is all that Mr. Sidney Cooper takes, and have a legendary air like the strait garments of their companions, Shem, and Ham, and Japhet.

Why, in short, should the young idealist trouble about drawing at all, when cows and trees and rivers and fields are the sport of his fancy, and may be presented in whatever form is most convenient to the painter? By making them resemble Noah's Ark animals you "give them off from the competition of the visible." Well, so you do, certainly. But why this mean compromise with the visible at all? Why make them resemble anything in particular? In this region of sportive fancy, circles and dots and noughts and crosses would surely do just as well, and save a great deal of trouble. Only, as one of the "populace," I must enter a humble plea for one thing more, and that is that a key should be appended to these "arrested forms."

The Doctrine of Symbols.

And that brings me to another great doctrine of D. S. M.'s, which may be called the doctrine of symbols. At the last exhibition of the New English Art Club, Mr. Wilson Steer, who has great abilities, exhibited two canvases, one called "Boulogne Sands," the other "A Procession of Yachts." The first appeared to me (always speaking as one of the "populace") to be ill-drawn (notably the sitting child in the foreground), to be scored all over with disagreeable hard lines and flecked with innumerable spots of detached colour. The sky seemed flat and dirty, and from the whole picture I got no hint of atmosphere or open air, nothing that reminded me of any seashore I had ever seen. I thought it a wilful caprice by a man much too good and able to play these antics. But D. S. M. again came to the rescue of my "confusion" and "affliction." I read in the next week's *Spectator* (November 26, 1892):—

"Boulogne Sands" is the very music of colour in its gayest and most singing moments, and every character and association of the scene helps by suggestion in the merry tête of light. The children playing, the holiday encampment of the bathers' tents, the glints of people flaunting themselves

like flags, the dazzle of sand and sea, and over and through it all the chattering lights of noon—it is like the sharp notes of pipes and strings sounding to an invitation by Ariel. It is all this, yet nine out of ten people will get no further with it than to notice that one of the little girls has awkward legs. . . . The sky of the beach scene, for example, if it be taken as representing form and texture, is ridiculous ; it is like something rough and chippy, and if that suggestion gets too much in the way, the method has overshot its mark. Its mark is to express by a *symbol* the vivid life in the sky-colour, the sea-colour, and the sand-colour, and it is doubtful if the richness and subtlety of their colour can be conveyed in any other way.

I have italicised the important word. That was the key, and if it had only been appended to the picture, I should have known better. It was all a symbol. Those innumerable spots symbolised the “chattering lights” of noon. That “something rough and chippy” symbolised “the vivid life in the sky-colour, the sea-colour, and the sand-colour.” But how was I to know? The key did not appear till the following week, and then only in the *Spectator*.

Well, if symbols it is to be, I confess I prefer a simpler kind. I can't imagine why anyone should go to the trouble of paint and canvas, when he has pen and ink. A good legible hand which should write across a sheet of white paper “chattering lights of noon,” “vivid life in sea-colour and sky-colour” would surely be just as symbolical and very much more intelligible than that “something rough and chippy,” which Mr. Steer has preferred. And if, again, in his procession of yachts, Mr. Steer had made his boats look like yachts and had written across the sails that here was the “rain and beat of light” (as his critic explains it), I for one should have been much more gratified.

Pirouetting on Paper.

The “doctrine of symbols” led to a lively little passage of arms between G. M. (the “new” art critic of the *Speaker*) and D. S. M. G. M. (who has a sense of proportion and a respect for the classics which is rare among “new critics”) objected to the doctrine of the symbol “as a dangerous sophistry used to conceal deficiencies in a painter, whose very real and loyal talent we both admire.” D. S. M. defended himself by substituting “metaphor” for “symbol.” The “something

rough and chippy" might be called a metaphor, if not a symbol. From that point he went on to develop his theory of art. "Drawing," he tells us, "is at bottom a kind of gesture," and painting a kind of gesture which will vary according to the consistency of the paint. When you transfer seas and skies and cows into the language of gesture, you use metaphor. In another article, earlier in the year, D. S. M. used a figure, which is more picturesque :—

For drawing is at bottom, like all the arts, a kind of gesture, a method of dancing upon paper. The dance may be mimetic ; but it is the *verve* of the performance, not the closeness of the imitation, that impresses, and tame additions of truth will encumber and not convince. The dance must control the pantomime. Rivers and skies and faces are taken up by a painter as illustrations of a mood, and the lines of the image he creates are not meant to reproduce the thing, but to convey what he felt about the thing—the salutation, the caress, he gave to it.

Now is it too much to say that D. S. M. is himself the victim of metaphor and symbol? Was there ever anything quite so extravagant as this about "dancing upon paper"? You pirouette with the pencil, and rivers and skies and faces become involved in the whirligig. What wonder if the young painters come to think that the arduous toil of great artists in learning to draw is so much waste energy, when they are told by their ablest critic that it is all a dance, a gesture, a flourish of the wrist which "tame additions of truth" do but encumber?

If it ended there, this would concern none of us except the painters themselves and those who roll their logs. But it does not end there. We have a band of critics teaching with great unanimity a theory of art which either denies that art is concerned with the beautiful or asserts that what a natural instinct calls "repulsive" is in reality the standard of beauty. Of course, it all follows naturally enough, if these gentlemen's premisses are correct. If it is the object of the painter to cut capers upon paper or upon canvas, if nothing else matters so long as the caper is cut with agility, why, then the two sodden people at the café may easily be "the standard," for Degas's performances are astonishingly clever. If you have been brought up in another

way, and have been taught to think that dignity of subject and the endeavour to portray a thing of beauty are of the essence of art, you will never be induced to consider "l'Absinthe" a work of art, however "incurable" your "affliction and confusion" may be. It may be "a lesson" (as G. M. puts it)—a dismal piece of low life, and it is, no doubt, a skilful exercise with the brush, but it is not more. This is not a quarrel between one method and another—between impressionism and realism—for impressionism can be exquisitely beautiful, as Mr. Whistier and Mr. Brabazon have taught us. It touches the whole question of artistic ideals, and in that matter, at all events, not even the humblest of us need entrust his conscience to a group of critics, however assertive and unanimous they may be. This is the humble remonstrance of

A PHILISTINE.

REPLIES AND CRITICISMS.

The following letters, &c., appeared in THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE after the publication of "The Philistine's" Remonstrance:—

A REPLY BY "D. S. M."

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—I have read the confessions of "The Philistine" in to-night's WESTMINSTER GAZETTE. The affliction that he parades is indeed incurable; he will never know what painting is. As a weather-gauge of popular fancy for pictures he is, however, most valuable. Velasquez and other old masters, it appears, "appeal to the ordinary understanding"; of the moderns, Mr. Whistler and Mr. Brabazon "have taught us . . ."; and even Mr. Steer is "too good and able"—to paint as he does. Given these advanced illusions, it is a matter almost of exact arithmetic to foretell at what date Degas will be added to the canon. In about a year he will be too great to paint as he does; in another year he will "have taught us . . ."; in three he will "make an appeal to the ordinary person." In five years "L'Absinthe" or some other work of the master will be in the National Gallery, if we can then afford it. The "worm" will thereupon turn again, and busy itself in delending the inclusion of the picture for the wrong reasons.

One great "maxim" imputed to me I must renounce all claim to, though I hesitate to put my own knowledge of my poor writings against the very flattering familiarity that my reader shows. I trust I have never said that "subject is nothing," for I don't think it. Perhaps it was one of my "unanimous" fellows, with whom I have passages of arms, to whom this occurred. And what puzzles me is that any man should find the subject of the Degas uninteresting. I should be sorry to have so small humanity as not to find in that *café* group food for speculation. I don't for a moment expect a man with no painter's instinct to see the beauty of the water-bottle, let alone the

absinthe-glass : but if he has any instincts at all, why doesn't he enjoy the extraordinary comprehension with which the scene and characters are rendered ? He would do well to drop reading the *Spectator* for a time, and take lessons in becoming one, from a master like this. Fine art is for fine eyes.

March 9.

D. S. M.

A REJOINDER BY THE PHILISTINE.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—It is very kind of D. S. M. to predict my future career. But really that is quite unimportant except to myself, and the prediction is based on a purely fanciful idea of my past history, which is nothing to the point.

I will discuss or palliate my "affliction." But the "confusion" surely is not all mine. D. S. M. assumes that because I object to "L'Absinthe" being paraded as a "standard" of art, therefore I find Degas uninteresting. Not at all. I paid my little tribute to "the *verve* of the performance." I admitted its humanity. I don't object when G. M. calls it a "lesson." "A life of idleness and low vice is on her face" is, if I remember rightly, the expression which he applied to the female figure. I only object when D. S. M. sets up these "two rather sodden people" as a standard of art, and asserts that they are not "repulsive." Here, I think, D. S. M. lets his admiration for the "handling" confuse him. Fine painting it may be, but "fine art" is a very different thing. When a work like this is set up as a standard of beauty, I think I discern the cause of the vulgarities and flippancies which are spoiling so many young painters.—Yours truly,

THE PHILISTINE.

MR. HARRY QUILTER UPON "D. S. M."

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—The most important aspect of the New Art Criticism seems to have escaped the attention of your various correspondents. Will you kindly grant me the space to point out that the gentleman who veils his personality under the initials of D. S. M. is not to be blamed so much for his ignorance of the art of painting, although that be as "extensive and peculiar" as the elder Mr. Weller's knowledge of London, as for

the undeserved contumely and rancour with which he attacks, not this or that individual painter, but whole classes of men who had grown grey in the service of Art before he had passed his Little Go at Oxford. I have read no criticism in all my life more unjust, more splenetic, and more absurd than the lucubrations of this young gentleman (in the newspaper which I have for years served and honoured) on the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours, and the works exhibited at their galleries.

I did not think till last week that any parallel could be found in modern art writing for these condemnations of the art of water-colour, and the painters who have made that art their chief study. But at the close of last week there appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* an article, either written by D. S. M. or in that imitation which is the sincerest flattery, which dealt with the whole exhibition of the Institute of Water-Colour Painters in the same spirit of unmitigated and unscrupulous abuse.

There was, it is true, this difference, that, whereas the *Speculator* critic merely condemned the whole art of water-colour painting, the writer of the *P.M.G.* confined himself to condemnation of the members and contributors to the Institute; but with regard to the pictures the result was the same, they were all an *anathema maranatha*. Those who enjoyed them were fools, those who wrought them ignoramus destitute of the "painter's instinct."

Sir, the conductors of great newspapers have duties to the public, and to those whose works are criticised in their columns, as well as towards their circulation and the gentlemen who contribute their articles. And I say without the slightest hesitation, and over my own signature, that writing which thus pours contempt upon large bodies of accomplished and competent artists is not only detestable in itself, but is unworthy of the protection of anonymity and the influence lent to it by the name of a decent journal.

I have had nearly twenty years' experience of art criticism. I know how hard it is to write without giving offence; I know how difficult it is, even when conviction is most intense, to set down the reasons of that conviction in plain words which shall not be suspected of partisan inspiration; but it has been reserved for me within the last few months to discover in journal after journal articles professedly devoted to criticism which are nothing but the misrepresentation of the art with which they deal and the artists whose works are mentioned. And once for all I enter my protest against such writing. If the archangel Gabriel

came down from heaven and turned art critic, I would still say that he must adopt another tone, if he wished either to help the public or to help the painters, than this little amateur whom Oxford has sent us, and who can find nothing worthy of his admiration outside the little room where the discredited divinities of the New English Art Club hide their diminished heads, and vainly seek, with the promise of a free afternoon tea, to entice visitors to their gallery.

The worst of it is that the harm done by such articles is scarcely to be measured even by the ignorance of their writers. People are apt to take their opinions from a newspaper, as well as their facts, and painters who are trying hard to utter clearly whatever voice of art is within them may well feel disheartened and disgusted when between them and the public whom they seek to influence there stands this sheeted spectre misrepresenting their aims, denying their power, and ridiculing their achievement.

I have carefully avoided quoting in this letter. I desire only as a writer to enter a protest against the spirit of the criticism of which I have been speaking—as a writer, and perhaps I may say as a painter also. For I think equal injustice is done to the arts of painting and literature by this unreasoned scorn, this denial of all forms of art, save one, and that form as degraded as it is narrow, and as alien to all the ancient spirit of fine art as it is in close communion with the worse vices of our latter-day civilisation.—Yours faithfully,

21, Bryanston-square, W.

HARRY QUILTER.

“D. S. M.” UPON MR. HARRY QUILTER.

To the EDITOR *of* THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—The remonstrance of “The Philistine” is naturally completed by abuse from Mr. Harry Quilter. He charges, among other things, (1) that I “veil my personality under the initials of D. S. M.” and yet knows (2) that I am young; (3) was at Oxford; (4) am a “little amateur”; (5) wrote a notice in the *Pall Mall* of last week on the Institute of Water-Colour Painters; and he accuses me (6) of not admiring the water-colours of artists with grey hair; (7) of praising discredited divinities who hide their diminished heads in a “little” room, and vainly entice me to it with the promise of tea; (8) of pouring contempt on whole bodies of men, and, in particular, being unjust, splenetic, and absurd about the Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours. He furthe

intimates (9) that I condemn the whole art of water-colour painting ; and (10) that I am a "sheeted spectre."

Now I submit to the writer who exposes his personality over the name in full "Harry Quilter," that (1) it is the simplest propriety in an art critic to keep his personality to himself, seeing that it is only his criticism with which the public has any concern. But, if there is to be pointless unveiling of personalities, I suggest (2) that Mr. Quilter was probably once younger than he is now, and that age has not palpably improved his taste ; (3) that on his own confession he has been at Cambridge—he may even have passed his Little Go there ; (4) that, also on his own confession, he is an amateur, whether "little" or large does not appear. I inform him (5) that I did not write the notice in the *Pall Mall*, but gather, from the violence of his description, that it was judicious. As to the remaining counts, with all respect to an art critic of twenty years' standing, I don't think (6) that it would be convenient, or even gratifying, to the artists themselves to judge of the merits of their works by the colour of their hair, nor (7) that one should condemn good pictures because of the tea provided in the gallery, or because the gallery itself is small. I observe (8) the exemplary justice, sweetness, and reasonableness Mr. Quilter displays to "a whole body of artists"—the New English Art Club—and remember the pleasure with which I have praised work at the Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours when the opportunity offered. I plead guilty to having spoken in general terms of the prevailing character of that society's exhibitions, because I think the fair rule in picture criticism is to praise the man when one has a chance, but to attack a style rather than an individual who has done his best but not succeeded.

As to (9) the art of water-colour (of which I am ignorant and scornful). . . . But why does Mr. Quilter remind us of tales we were all fast forgetting ? I, for one, always thought he was hardly used for his failure to recognise as a water-colour a work which was, like so many of the objects of his admiration, wanting in the qualities proper to that exquisite art. The "sheeted spectre" (10) is difficult. This is perhaps in the tone that Mr. Quilter would sternly impose on the Archangel Gabriel. It certainly leaves one without reply.

I should not have troubled you again about "The Philistine," but as he has corrected one statement in his answer to my letter, allow me to correct the other, as I am sure he would have done had he noticed it.

The remark he quotes about the expression on the woman's face does not belong to me. May I add that the block of "L'Absinthe" in your issue of this evening almost deserves what he said of the picture; but perhaps your readers have seen the very fair reproduction you published, in your impartial way, with an eulogistic notice, in THE BUDGET.—I am, yours faithfully,
D. S. M.

[And yet another admirer of the picture tells us that the reproduction in THE BUDGET was entirely abominable, and the sketch in THE GAZETTE quite admirable.—Ed. W.G.]

A REJOINDER BY MR. QUILTER.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—I am not surprised to find D. S. M. as reckless and inaccurate in controversy as I have invariably known him to be unfair and narrow in criticism. But I will not trouble you with any long reply to his letter, but only simply state the things which I did not say, although he states that they are contained in my letter.

1. I did not affirm that he wrote the notice in the *Pall Mall* on which I animadverted: I conjectured only by the virulence of the article that it must either have been written by him or by some imitator and admirer of his style.

2. I do not accuse D. S. M. of "not admiring the water-colours of artists with grey hair"; but I accuse him, if he likes that word, for the undeserved contumely and rancour with which he has attacked men who have grown grey in the service of art." These accusations are very different (do they not still teach logic at Oxford?); and while I repeat the second I altogether disclaim having ever been such an idiot as to have made the first.

3. In no part of my letter do I say that D. S. M. either praises "discredited divinities," or is enticed to do so "with the promise of tea." What I do say is that he finds nothing worthy of admiration outside the New English Art Club Gallery; and this can be abundantly proved by any reader who cares to hunt up the back numbers of the *Spectator* for the past few months.

4. I will not controvert D. S. M.'s statement that I was once younger than I am now, although I cordially agree that (*vide* his writing) the same could not be truthfully predicted of himself. But I entirely deny

that I "confess" I have been at Cambridge, for there is no reference whatever to that University in my letter, and, moreover, confession is not the word which Cambridge men use, or consider applicable to having been a member of that *alma mater*.

5. I also make no confession as to being an amateur; for as a matter of fact I believe I have little right to claim that proud title; for it is many years since I worked hard at painting as a profession, and a considerable number even since I was able to get every now and again a few shekels for so doing.

As to the remainder of D. S. M.'s rather ridiculous assertions, I may say briefly that I am perfectly prepared to prove, by reference to his articles in the *Spectator*, that he has habitually spoken with insolence, ignorance, and intolerance of the chief artistic societies in England, especially the Royal Academy, the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours, the Royal Institutes of Oil and Water Colour Painting, and the Royal Society of British Artists. I am prepared to prove that he has insulted every member of those bodies in his or her corporate capacity, and many of them as individual artists; and I beg to conclude with remarking that there is not a single assertion in my first letter which D. S. M. has shown to be inaccurate, and that the wretched attempt at defence which he makes to-day only stamps him as being as incapable a writer as he is—— a critic.—Yours faithfully,

HARRY QUILTER.

21, Bryanston-square, W., March 16.

FROM VARIOUS PAINTERS ABOUT "L'ABSINTHE."

I—Mr. W. B. Richmond.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

DEAR SIR,—It is difficult, nay, impossible, to account for tastes in matters of art.

I suppose each of us admires that which appeals most directly to our own inner selves. We admire what we are fitted to admire.

It would be futile to take up a line of your space to argue about taste.

There is, however, one very curious point worth mentioning as a matter of fact.

The English Impressionists ridicule subject and "literary art."

At the same time Mons. Degas is their god.

Now "L'Absinthe" is a literary performance.

It is not painting at all.

It is a novelette—a treatise against drink.

Everything valuable about it could have been done, and has been done, by Zola.

Hogarth preached sermons likewise, but he painted them ; and quite apart from their subjects, or rather in spite of them, Hogarth's pictures are great works of painting, interesting and complete in every sense.

It would be ridiculous not to recognise M. Degas as a very clever man, but curiously enough his cleverness is literary far more than pictorial.

This is the reason, I suspect, why a certain set of writers have taken him up : they confuse his painting with his story-telling powers.—Yours truly,

Beavor Lodge, Hammersmith.

W. B. RICHMOND.

Mr. C. W. Furse.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

DEAR SIR,—Will you allow me to correct certain of the more obvious misapprehensions under which Mr. W. B. Richmond appears to be labouring ? In the first place, no one has ever been so foolish as to try and eliminate “ subject from painting, or to object to the presence of a literary idea.” They have merely said that it can never be the *raison d'être* of a picture. For instance, so long as you paint human beings, the intelligent observer will inevitably receive psychological suggestions from the moulding of the forehead, the setting of the eyes, the contour of nose and mouth, &c. And the recognition of this fact in no way interferes with the axiom that a picture must, in the first place, be a great painting, as a fine poem must be fine poetry, the which truism I repeat for the benefit of “ A Philistine,” who, in the course of this controversy, made the astounding remark that a picture might be fine painting, but that that was a long way from being fine art.

Secondly, Mr. Richmond believes that no one who looks at M. Degas's picture can be interested in its essential pictorial qualities, which recalls the saying of the late Master of Trinity, that a certain person had plenty of taste, and all of it bad. For it is difficult to understand the frame of mind of a man who had devoted thirty years or more to the study of art,

and then, looking at "L'Absinthe," is unconscious of those qualities of draughtsmanship, design, and colour with which the picture teems.

However, I can assure him that any genuine admirer of the picture finds, in its delicacy of selection, the subtlety and research of its drawing, and its curious charm of composition, intellectual beauties as completely satisfying as a great symphony to a musician.—I am, Sir, yours, &c.

33, Tite-street, Chelsea.

CHARLES W. FURSE.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

DEAR SIR,—Painters as well as critics differ. Mr. Charles W. Furse, everyone knows, is an artist of great promise, and before he took the French poison he painted manly, and, to my old-fashioned taste, admirable portraits.

I have no fear that his recovery or convalescence will not be speedy, for there was good sense marked upon every line of his work.

Mr. Furse cannot understand, because I have studied art for thirty years (alas! they are forty), why I fail to see what only exists for a very narrow clique.

It is just because of those forty years of the study of the best art of various schools that the galleries of Europe display, I do not confound *good* and *not good* painting.

It is almost a truism to state the fact that none but the most highly-finished work in any of the three arts will bear the tests of time.

Perfect craftsmanship, such as was Van Eyck's, Holbein's, Bellini's, Michael Angelo's, becomes more valuable as time goes on. Time adds to its value.

The qualities admired by this new school are certainly the mirrors of that side of nineteenth-century development most opposed to fine painting, or, say, fine craftsmanship.

Hurry, rush, fashions, are the enemies of toil, patience, and seclusion, without which no great works are produced. Hence the admiration for an art fully answering to a demand.

No doubt impressionism is an expression in painting of the deplorable side of modern life.

It belongs to the interviewing, advertising, inquisitive evolution, and, therefore, its existence is regretted by serious artists, painters, writers, or musicians.

Mr. Furse compares the pleasures he and his friends derive from "L'Absinthe" as equal to those of a musician listening to a great "symphony." Surely the analogy is not a happy one.

A symphony is not only the most complete but the most complex of musical modes of expression.

The vault paintings of the Sixtine Chapel are like a great symphony.

The very limited little picture under discussion is like a string quartette, such as we have all listened to under pleasant conditions of our circulation from inside a French *café*.—Yours truly, W. B. RICHMOND.

II.—Mr. Walter Crane.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

DEAR SIR,—A new "boom" in criticism founded on "Absinthe"! Well, criticism, in art at least, no doubt requires some stimulant to revive its drooping spirits—some new pretext for justifying its existence, the non-necessity for which, I thought, had long ago been demonstrated by Mr. Whistler.

Here is a study of human degradation, male and female, presented with extraordinary insight and graphic skill, with all the devotion to the realisation (or idealisation) of squalid and sordid unloveliness, and the outward and visible signs of the corruption of society which are characteristic of the most modern modern painting.

Such a study would not be without its value in a sociological museum, or even as an illustrated tract in the Temperance propaganda; but when we are asked to believe that this is a new revelation of beauty—that this is the Adam and Eve of a new world of æsthetic pleasure, degraded and not ashamed, a paradise of *unnatural* selection.—it is another matter.

The best answer is, perhaps, another question—How could one *live* with such a work? That is a test which never fails.

Critics of the school of D. S. M., I suppose, live in the hopes of "coercing" all and sundry into the "tardy recognition" of the loveliness of the unlovely.

Has, then, the right of private judgment yet to be won in art? And is our sacred bird the parrot? I object to coercion altogether, and I confess that I would rather meet "The Philistine" in his war-paint, "knowing what he likes" and "behaving as such," than see a whole public "coerced,"

sitting clothed, and in its *wrong* mind, at the feet of "the new art criticism," and drinking in "Absinthe."—Yours faithfully,

13, Holland-street, W., March 19.

WALTER CRANE.

III.—Mr. Walter Sickert.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—Much too much has been made of "drink" and "lessons," and "sodden," and "boozing" in relation to the picture by Degas.

I know the work of Degas very well, and his titles, and his reasons for them; and I will hazard the conjecture that "L'Absinthe" is not his title at all. I would wager, though I do not know, that he called the picture "Un Homme et une Femme assis dans un Café." This conjecture, whether by chance it be correct or not, is my criticism on the criticisms. I need not elaborate the importance of its bearing. If "L'Absinthe" be, by chance, his title, it is to be taken as having no further intention than such a title as Rubens's "Chapeau de Paille." But Degas measures the exact range of a word as carefully and as unerringly as he does that of a line or tone.—

Yours, &c.,
Chelsea.

W. SICKERT.

"HOW COULD ONE LIVE WITH IT?"

From the Owner of the Picture.

The first letter is, it will be seen, from the owner of the picture by Degas, upon which the recent discussion has mainly turned:—

SIR,—You have asked me to answer a question. How could one live with such a work as Degas's "L'Absinthe"? For so the picture has been named, but not by me. Mr. Crane says cohabitation is the test which never fails. Perhaps he forgets that it depends on who lives with a picture, and that true connoisseurs should be without prejudice. The interesting, though often personal and somewhat pointless, writing which has graced your columns is marked by the extreme partisan views taken by both sides. Before answering Mr. Crane it is, perhaps, well to say that as a collector my tastes are wide. Carot, Matthew and James Maris, Rousseau, Troyon, Constable, Gainsborough, Jansen van Ceulen, Vandyck, Raphael, Titian, Tintoretto, Velasquez, Whistler, Degas, Rembrandt, Reynolds, all are attractive to me. Hobbema and Crome, De Hooghe,

Ostade and Mieris, Frans Hals and Terburg, all are beloved by the owner of the picture someone has dubbed "L'Absinthe." Yet am I misguided enough to consider Mr. Matthew Maris, Mr. Whistler, and M. Degas perhaps the three greatest living painters in the world.

"Au Café," we have Deboutin's portrait, and that of the woman who took a seat beside him. This has set the preacher preaching, and "The Philistine" roaring. The picture is pronounced "vulgar, boozy, sottish, loathsome, revolting, ugly, besotted, degraded, repulsive," &c., &c. On M. Deboutin's face "'villany is depicted'; it is humanity brutalised by drink." "The Philistine" says "fine painting is not fine art"—what is it then? Mr. Richmond says "L'Absinthe" is "not good painting at all." Why not condemn "Oliver Twist" because the leading and most striking characters are criminals, an Adrian Ostade because the Boers are drunk, a Mieris because the subject is suggestive, a Rubens because the women are fleshly, or a Rembrandt because the subject is an autopsy? Never has so much bosh been written about a subject. The artist critics seem like dealers who want a "Seller" first, and a good picture afterwards. This is Trading Instinct.

"A treatise against drink," quoth Mr. Richmond. Why, Degas never thought of that; he saw Deboutin, and painted him as he saw him. And our pompous Mr. Quilter speaks once more. I know not these gentlemen's works. I never open my catalogue when going round a gallery until something arrests my attention. Mr. Richmond writes temperately, and his standard is good so far as it goes. Mr. Quilter writes personally, his form is bad, his art criticism worse. W. P. H. says: "Many men like tragedy, and it is clearly permissible to paint it." True; but M. Degas meant no tragedy; his unerring instinct unconsciously produced perfection of type. The man is ruminant, the woman dormant.

I will now try to answer Mr. Crane. I have lived with "L'Absinthe" for many months. It was hung in a position which enables me to pass and see it constantly; everyday I grew to like it better. At last, after frequent requests to sell, and wearied by the questionings of those who were incapable of understanding it, I exchanged it in part payment for another picture. It had not been away for forty-eight hours before I went back to the dealer, and, in order to recover it, bought another work by Degas, "La Répétition." "L'Absinthe" then went back into its former position. Such is the influence of Degas upon one who has studied the great Old Masters all his life. Do not think because I admire Degas that my

sympathies lie with those Impressionists who strive to sing in colour before they can articulate in drawing. Many of these Impressionists have great talent, perhaps genius. Mr. George Henry generally spoke indistinctly until he painted "Mademoiselle," a picture not free from faults, but full of genius, and one of the best things produced in Scotland for many a year.

Perhaps, after all, M. Degas is not an Impressionist. The term is a wide one, and often misapplied, and generally used to shelter those who are too young and too impatient to draw well. I have no patience with bad technique, nor with those who paint with chemical ignorance in fugitive colours of cheap, ill-prepared and non-durable surfaces.

Sadly I say it, but with full belief, that some artists seem neither broad enough in feeling nor in knowledge to make good critics. Wrapped up in their own work, they judge everything by their own standard. Mr. Richmond is quite right to decry hurry and rush; but true Impressionism is the outcome of knowledge and of study, not of hurry, nor of rush.

Corot was a great Impressionist. His Impressionism was the outcome of lifelong, laborious evolution. Corot took the beauty and poetry of Nature as it floated in morning or evening mist, or mid-day shimmer. Millet found beauty in an earth-stained field-worker. Why should not Degas see something in the "coulisses" of a theatre, or in a boulevard café?

Corot and Millet suffered at the hands of the critic; now they are understood. Degas will be understood, and in a few years those who blame will praise, and those who curse will bless.

Criticism is a matter of taste. We all have our standards. I am not a rabid disciple of the New Impressionism, and hold that Degas is not so much an Impressionist as a great painter; the outcome of the century, if you will, but still a master, the founder of a school of painters often unworthy of their master, and who will continue to be unworthy of their master until they learn restraint, to draw before they paint, and, when they paint, that two colours make a shade and three make mud.—Yours, &c.,

Saturday, March 25.

ARTHUR KAY.

P.S.—Since writing the above I have read G.M.'s article in the *Speaker*. He has almost entirely anticipated my letter. "In sheer lightness of heart," and in language which my poor pen cannot command, he has put my thoughts on paper. I, alas! had waited to burst the bubble

blown from "Absinthe," and for the opportunity to compare the preachers to the famous cooper who concentrated all his energies in making a barrel for a bung-hole.—A. K.

LAST WORDS FROM MR. RICHMOND, A.R.A.

SIR,—The enclosed letter I ask you to be good enough to publish. I sent it to the *Spectator*; it was not printed, for reasons to be justified, no doubt, by the editor of that journal.

I begin to fear that the answers of D. S. M. to my questions may not be satisfactory, that they may not clear him; for in last evening's WESTMINSTER he displays a carelessness in regard to his statements which accuses him as being in bad straits for manly argument.

He makes me say "Temperance tract." I wrote "Treatise upon drink." He deforms other statements of mine to suit his purposes of rhetoric. Quotations ought at least to be exact. He claims "Finger-nail finish" for M. Degas, whose art he classes with the art of Van Eyck and Holbein. He claims a quality for the work of M. Degas which he constantly ridicules when it is visible in pictures he does not like or understand: this is certainly not fair. Is it even quite honest? Whatever may or may not be the merits of M. Degas as a painter, they bear no resemblance in kind or character with the merits of Holbein or Van Eyck, to which they are indeed as the poles opposed.

The statements of D. S. M. in regard to these matters are as uncritical as they are rash, as demonstrative of his inexperience as an "expert" as they are futile.

He speaks of the "more summary method" of Michael Angelo! More summary than that of M. Degas?

D. S. M. has no doubt seen works by Michael Angelo of architecture, sculpture, and painting, but he has regarded them with the eyes of an extraordinary member of Philistia, and employed his critical faculty, if it exists, as a wilful child might do.

It is quite clear that his "fine eyes" were not closed for the nonce, but his mind was wandering towards chaos.

So has our "natural aristocrat" proved his assumption of a dignified title to be a trifle arrogant. So he has not employed his "assiduous cultivation" even if he had it; he has instead employed prejudice, and shielded his incapacity for clear thought behind paradox.

Must we conclude that this writer advocates by his example his dictum

that "tame additions of *truth* only encumber and do not convince" ? Are we to take it that the literary art as practised by D. S. M. is indeed only a "kind of gesture," a dancing upon paper in so involved, irresponsible, and jaunty a style as he is able to assume ? I fear so.

Is all his penmanship mere fooling, mere playing with serious matters to make "copy" ?

It looks like it.

Such looseness in the use of language and metaphor does D. S. M. adopt, and so uncertain is his posture before facts, that, indeed, he does not "convince"—his attempts at "coercion" lend themselves to oblivion.

One would be angry with him if one took him seriously.

Also, he, who is so very outspoken about our shortcomings as artists, must not be angry if we are inclined to question the value of his literary efforts and give them the treatment their flippancy deserves.—Yours faithfully,

W. B. RICHMOND.

Sunday, March 26.

To the EDITOR of THE SPECTATOR.

DEAR SIR,—D. S. M. made the following statement in a recent number of the *Spectator* :—

"Everyone outside of this natural aristocracy belongs to the populace as far as painting is concerned." Then follows : "This *populace* had to be coerced by *experts* into admiring, or feigning to admire, the Old Masters *in the time of the Old Masters*."

Will D. S. M. be good enough to enlighten a humble student of history by answering the following questions from him :—

I. To what populace does he refer ?

II. Who coerced them ?

III. What was the nature of the *expert* opinion, and how was it employed in the time of the Old Masters ?

IV. With what dates does D. S. M. propose to define the beginning and the end of "Old Masters."

As a man of letters, D. S. M. should have documentary evidence for the support of his statement.

Accuracy is such a rare and valuable quality that I feel sure D. S. M. will encourage the pursuit of it even by a painter.

One of the very few benefits a critic can bestow upon public or painters, is to dig out facts for them, and for us to contemplate and make use of.—Yours faithfully,

W. B. RICHMOND.

SUMMING UP.

PHILISTINE.

Oh, why should I be bullied by the very newest school,
 And sniffed at, if I differ, as a missing-worded fool?
 And is it merely ignorance to think a painted tree
 Should bear some faint resemblance to a thing I sometimes see?
 And can't a thing be beautiful to look upon unless
 Its most distinguishable mark is wilful ugliness?
 Is nothing worth the painting but the things we'd rather shun?
 And— who are you that bully us, when all is said and done?

D. S. M.

No doubt my insight your dull wit surprises.
 The artist who to heights of glory wings
 Omits to draw, but deftly—symbolises :
 And foul at once grows fair, when Colour sings.
 To speak, on terms, with my superiority
 Just Heaven denies to all the crass majority.

H—Y Q—R.

You nasty impertinent brat of a boy,
 Your elders and betters you want to annoy.
 You're an ignorant, impudent, small Amateur ;
 And your afternoon-tea-club's excessively poor.
 To a Spectre thus sheeted no Artist gives credit :
 Boo ! Oxford ! Get out ! H—y Q—r has said it.

OMNES.

Ah !
 Yah !

PETER PIPER.

PART II.

THE NEW CRITICISM.

(Published originally as the New Log-Rolling.)

BY THE PHILISTINE.

*With Replies and Contributions from Mr. Richard Le Gallienne
and many others.*

I.—A RAIN OF GENIUSES.

A little less than two years ago, an innocent article which I wrote for this journal produced a lively controversy between the "new critics" and the old, in respect to modern methods of picture criticism. That is now an old story, but so also in large measure is the new criticism. The last young man's attempts to paint the unpaintable are no longer greeted as the manifestation of the true and only style of painting; nor are we asked to accept some pockmarked canvas, with ill-drawn or half-drawn figures, as symbolic of the poetry of motion, or of the "rain and riot of sunlight." Instead, we have "D. S. M." falling back upon the philosophy of the Philistine concerning repose in art. What, for instance, could be more admirable (and old-fashioned) than these remarks about "Giorgione," which I read in last week's *Spectator* :—

Giorgione further kept to the kind of subject that is characteristic for painting, and that is the pausing, stationary subject. Painters can do wonderful things in the representation of action or the suggestion of movement, but dramatic action is the characteristic matter of the stage, not of painting; and restlessness is the worst vice in composition. People resting are the painter's subject; and the exalted rest of faces attuned to music is Giorgione's.

"Restlessness is the worst vice in composition. People resting are the painter's subject." I hope "D. S. M." will go on telling that, and a few other old truths, to his own friends. It is the more necessary since some of the old critics, in their extreme desire to be "up to date," have taken recently to a rather indiscriminate eulogy of all "new" work, good and bad, and bad rather more than good. If this goes on, the old critics will shortly take the place of the new, while the new will have reverted to the old tradition. This will be rather hard on old-critics-become-new, for by that time the new painters will all have become old. Such is modern art.

With all this, however, the Philistine need not now concern himself. He can afford to watch and wait, and so far as painting is concerned he has nothing to gain by exposing himself at present to another riot of epigrams among painter-critics and critic-painters. If there is any appropriate word for him to say at the present time it concerns another art—the writer's art—which is passing through a phase curiously parallel with that revolution of the studios which amused all the town two years ago. New poets, new prose-writers, and new fictionists are now discovered more rapidly and proclaimed more noisily than their brother artists in the palmiest days of the new painting. The old critics have mostly abdicated, and if they notice the new work it is generally to fling a jibe at it. But the new critics are carrying on their very worst traditions of log-rolling. They are apparently divided into little coteries, and we might suppose that they were all pledged to run every member of their coteries, each in turn, as the greatest genius of his time. At all events, this seems to me a more probable explanation of the rain of geniuses witnessed in the last weeks of 1894 than that we should postulate a series of portentous births in these times, the like of which could hardly be matched in a similar short space of any literary epoch. For think what has happened in these last epoch-making weeks. At the beginning of this period I, as a Philistine who clings to his old masters and "acknowledged excellences," was just beginning to adjust myself to the belief that Mr. William Watson was winning his claim to be called a poet without any invidious qualification. Certain epithets which had been applied to him seemed to me rather tall, but taking the bulk of his work, and noting his gradual ascent in art, his claim, it seemed, was beginning to be made good. But before I had come to this cautious conclusion I was hopelessly out of date. One week brought us Mr. John Davidson, whose claim to be "a poet of the highest order," I was informed in several quarters, could only be denied at the expense of my credit for judgment and taste. Here was a "human" poet, beside whom Mr. Watson, with his artificial verse, was merely dust and ashes. Mr. Davidson, then, was the name I was to remember as the

new Browning cum Swinburne cum Tennyson. But I had no sooner grown accustomed to this idea when I found that a still newer star had risen, no other than Mr. Selwyn Image, whose appearance, the *Saturday Review* and *Athenæum* simultaneously, and in curiously similar language, assured me, was the real Epiphany, and whose works were confidently expected to achieve immortality. Nor am I at rest yet, for I hear from private sources that there are two or three more just below the horizon whose rising will be phenomenal. Then there is that poet in the background who, as a correspondent told THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE, is "working" while the others are only "puffing themselves." I have no clue to the identity of this mysterious industrious man, but in these days one cannot afford to ignore anyone.

So much for the poets, but "great prose-writers" have been no less miraculously fertile in the same few weeks. At the beginning of the autumn Mr. Grant Allen (who, we know, discovers only the greater luminaries, and them at long intervals) seemed to have settled the matter in your columns by hailing Mr. Le Gallienne, whom I had ignorantly supposed to be the greatest of living minor poets, as the greatest of modern prose-writers. That was a reverberating opinion which returned from many quarters, but I was told by some that it took no account of Mr. Max Beerbohm, whose masterpieces, an article on Cosmetics, and another in praise of George IV. for the *Yellow Book*, are considered by discerning persons to be unequalled in the whole range of literature. But once more it is necessary to reconsider. For Mr. Le Gallienne himself, in an article in the last number of the *Realm*, generously hands in the crown of prose to another gentleman whose name I had never heard, but who, it seems, has achieved "one of the finest pieces of prose written in English for some years." But here I must quote Mr. Le Gallienne :—

Nor is it fine only in passages. The whole is so harmoniously proportioned. As the essay (for the two essays are really one) moves through all the developments of its quaint argument, and the changes of its rich music, one is reminded of the stately proportions of Milton's pamphlets—of the "Areopagitica," which was once a little unheeded pamphlet such as this. To praise a living writer is almost more dangerous than to blame

him. Then one fears lest we may embarrass the blushing writer himself—though that, maybe, is a supersensitive solicitude. Well, there are risks which “*The Remnant*” compels me to run. It seems to me, as Emerson said of “*The Leaves of Grass*” (to the magnitude of which I do not, of course, compare it), “one of the most extraordinary pieces of wit and wisdom” recently produced—eulogy which is not, perhaps, after all, extravagant—I might almost venture to say that Ireland has produced. Its blending of whimsical humour, quaint wit, impressive thought, and, above all, the rich poetry of its prose, give one the unmistakable thrill of an original temperament, the unique satisfaction of thought passionately conceived and divinely said.

“*The Remnant*” is by Mr. John Eglinton, and it is published in Dublin. It is a pamphlet of fifty pages, “prettily covered in rough grey paper, and daintily printed.” It “teased” Mr. Le Gallienne for several weeks “with its odd, enigmatic title” and “its air of being somebody or nobody.” Then he reviewed it (and read it), with “every intention of reading it again this afternoon, again to-morrow, and times innumerable to those friends whom we all delight to bore with our pretty gift of reading aloud.” Mr. Eglinton, I gather, is a kind of new Thoreau, and his book tells us how all those “national fertilisers and the idealists, the poets, and men and women of genius generally should leave this prosaic world,” where the mind consents to labour for the body and decamp into some mystic wilderness, where “they may catch their food in the stream and sleep under the wood-pigeon.” They have done their work for the time being, and they only disturb the Philistines, who don’t understand them, and want only to be peaceful and quiet citizens.

Now I have not read Mr. Eglinton’s “*Remnant*,” and being one of this latter class, my opinion would not matter if I had. “He who is not grateful,” says Mr. Le Gallienne, “for such prose as those extracts with which I have empurpled this article will be grateful for nothing.” Well, I am not particularly grateful, for the extracts seem to me “gold and purple stuff” (I quote Mr. Le Gallienne with a shade of difference in my intention) such as many a precious young man writes in these days. Of Wordsworth Mr. Eglinton appears to have spoken as one “whose name was a far-fluttering unattainable carol to him in his prison,” and whose decadence illustrated “the

prolonged decay of that great celandine." He speaks of the individual "who drops away and rolls off by himself to the wood or the seashore with a swelling potentiality of thought in his bosom." "A city," he says, "is Nature's doing, and London her hugest flower by the river's brim; but primroses are preferable when London begins to run to seed." Some of these extracts I don't understand; some are possible conceits, and some appear to me to have almost every vice that a prose sentence could have. Yet I have Mr. Le Gallienne's word for it that it reminds him of the "stately proportions of Milton's pamphlets—of the '*Areopagitica*,' which was once a little unheeded pamphlet such as this." (This statement is, of course, entirely unhistorical. "*Areopagitica*" was, indeed, "unheeded" in the sense that the author's offence against the press ordinance, in issuing the pamphlet unlicensed and unregistered, was condoned by the Parliament. But in no other sense was it "unheeded." On the contrary, the tract caused great and immediate stir, and gave the death-blow to the licensing system. But I must apologise. These are mere Philistine facts, and altogether beneath the notice of the New Criticism.) Clearly we must all read "*The Remnant*," and re-read the "*Areopagitica*," for anything less Miltonic, as most of us remember Milton, than Mr. Le Gallienne's extracts it would be impossible to conceive. Till then, so far as the prose crown goes, I shall continue to give my vote for Mr. Le Gallienne himself, on condition that he distinctly withdraws from the Laureateship.

Meanwhile, I would enter one feeble protest on behalf of myself and my brother Philistines. We must have a rest. We can't digest any more geniuses for at least six weeks. We do our best to keep pace; we conscientiously read every article that is headed a "new poet"; we order from the library every book of every writer who has the "beautiful secret of beautiful prose," or who harps "in a strain of beautiful prose music." But we have our daily work to do, and we can't keep up with it, not to mention the fact that our Mudie subscriptions won't stand it. Moreover, the superlatives themselves are exhausted, and must be left time to recover.

II.—POETS AND CRITICS.

In my first article I confined myself to a comparatively short period—the last six or seven weeks—in which, as I showed, three major poets, whose works are confidently expected to achieve immortality, have been made manifest. That, it has been pointed out to me, is unfair to other gentlemen of genius, whose work has been impartially distributed over the past year. In order, therefore, that there may be no grievance on this score, I have carried my investigation backwards over the whole of this remarkable period, and I hope before I have done to present a statistical table of genius which shall include prose-writers and writers of fiction as well as poets. The statistical method has many advantages; and, if kept up year by year, we shall be enabled ultimately to construct what statisticians call a “curve” of genius. It will thus be possible to estimate the intellectual wealth of the world as exactly as we now estimate its commercial wealth, and to observe scientifically its depressions, inflations, and movements.

My six weeks’ period I find to have been slightly inflated compared with the average. If the six weeks’ average had been maintained throughout the year, there ought to have been about twenty-six major poets during the twelve months, whereas, as a matter of fact, I find that there were only seven. My authority for this is Mr. Le Gallienne, who wrote a review of the poetry of the year in the *Weekly Sun* for December 16. Mr. Le Gallienne says the new major poets are seven, though they seem to count up to eight, for, in addition to the gentlemen mentioned below, he includes Mr. Kipling and Mr. Watson. These last, however, I will exclude, since they are fairly well known to Philistines. The remaining six in alphabetical order, with their chief points in the language in which Mr. Le Gallienne describes them, are as follows :—

MR. DAVIDSON “might be described as a great man; Mr. Watson as a great manner. . . . Passion, fantasy, romance, glamour—in these qualities

all his work is steeped. . . . He has a careless fecundity that accompanies power . . . a man of genius. . . . No one since Rossetti has written romantic ballads approaching those of Mr. Davidson . . . a genius like a sun illuminating with its generous light the whole world of man."

MR. GALE, "by sheer sincerity of dreaming and skill in singing, has charmed us back into the dream-world of his choice. Has this advantage over the Caroline poets—the dainty charm of whose lyrics he has so surprisingly caught—a real love of the country, and a real knowledge of country sights and manners."

MR. ALFRED HAYES has "an imminent new book," which will place him high among the younger poets.

MR. ARTHUR SYMONS.—"Mr. Rudyard Kipling and Mr. Arthur Symons alone seem to sing in the living present, and even the burden of their song is old as any—the glory of the British Army, and the glorification of what Mr. Kipling has called 'the oldest profession in the world.'"

MR. FRANCIS THOMPSON.—"A master of fantastic hyperbole, who carries imagery safely up into the topmost heaven of invention, such as no English poet save Shakespeare has ever ventured." "A rare quality of loveliness of entralling glamour." "An exquisite sensitiveness to the most tremulous tones of beauty." "Do you call such poetry as this 'minor verse'?"

MR. YEATS has "Celtic magic" of which only an adequate idea could be given by quoting a whole scene from his finest poem. But he also writes "tiny bewitching lyrics."

All these, it must be remembered, are major poets:—

There is in their work a body of achievement which few decades in the literature of our country have surpassed, and which, as promise, should leave us quite easy, nay confident, of the future of poetry in our land. Every fine poet has been sneered at as a minor poet in his day. Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, Matthew Arnold—these were all minor poets once. Every new man is looked upon as a minor poet till he forces the world to admit him a major. But to apply the term "minor poet," at any rate in any contemptuous sense, to such poets as we have considered, is as ridiculous as it is unfair.

This list I felt instinctively to be incomplete, so I turned the page and found Mr. Le Gallienne very nicely done in the same style by Mr. Arthur Waugh:—

MR. RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.—"Much of a poet, not a little of a critic, most of all, it may be, a writer of fanciful and finished prose in the manner of Charles Lamb, he has with his 'Prose Fancies' (John Lane) added a genuine contribution to the literature which one turns to with regularity, from season to season, for charm and grateful refreshment. 'Prose

Fancies' has one indisputable mark of talent; no other man of his] day could have written it; it is shot through and through with a striking and artistic individuality. It is written, moreover, in a lilting, lyrical prose, which sustains its melody, with remarkable skill, through page after page without halting, and it bears, above all, the hall-mark of human sympathy and intense sensibility. It remains quite the most remarkable piece of prose produced by any of our young contemporaries."

Why drag in Charles Lamb, as Mr. Whistler said of Valesquez when someone had said that no one but he and the great Spaniard could have painted a certain picture? Why drag in Tennyson, Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Browning? For one of our new poets has a "genius like the sun," another equals Shakespeare in daring, another "has an advantage over" the classic Caroline lyricists, a fourth appears in one respect to be more than Elizabethan, and all seven together have in a few months done that "which few *decades* in the literature of our country have surpassed." Minor poetry indeed! Mr. Le Gallienne may well be indignant at the suggestion. For my part, I perhaps envy most the gentleman who has scaled the heights "by sheer sincerity of dreaming." How exactly he did it and what the process is are to me very interesting problems. Why should we not all "dream sincerely," if it can be done that way?

Mr. Le Gallienne's list, it will be seen, does not include Mr. Selwyn Image, the newest "new poet" who, as I showed in my last article, appears now to hold the field. But Mr. Image is of another school, and it is a rule when you are selecting major poets never to select anyone of another school. So for Mr. Image I was driven to the *Saturday Review* and the *Athenæum*. But his character can be constructed in exactly the same way.

MR. SELWYN IMAGE.—"No one else could have done it (*i.e.*, written "Poems and Carols") in just this way [cf. Mr. Waugh upon Mr. Le Gallienne], and the artist himself could have done it in no other way." "A remarkable impress of personality, and this personality of singular rarity and interest. Every piece is perfectly composed; the 'mental cartooning,' to use Rossetti's phrase, has been adequately done . . . an air of grave and homely order . . . a union of quaint and subtly simple homeliness, with a somewhat abstract severity. . . . It is a new thing, the revelation of a new poet. . . . Here is a book which may be trusted to outlive most contemporary literature."—*Saturday Review*.

"An intensely personal expression of a personality of singular charm, gravity, fancifulness, and interest ; work which is alone among contemporary verse alike in regard to substance and to form . . . comes with more true novelty than any book of verse published in England for some years."—*Athenæum*.

Most poets, especially when the book is their first, expect to have to wait a little for their reviews. But these two opinions in two different quarters were as instantaneous as they were decisive. The book had only been published a few days, when Mr. Image was hailed as a "new poet" by the *Saturday Review*, and the *Athenæum*, though the book could hardly have been in its possession a week, put it unhesitatingly in the first place in reviewing the poetry of the year. Under these circumstances even a Philistine gets a book, and I accordingly possessed myself of "Poems and Carols." My previous acquaintance with Mr. Image's "Carols" was from stray samples in the "Hobby Horse," one of which obstinately stuck in my head :—

Wild, wild, wild, and wild
Howls the wind and swirls the snow
Where to-night sweet Mary mild
Sees very God's self now.

The first and last lines especially endeared themselves to me for their "lilting, lyrical" qualities, as Mr. Arthur Waugh would say. "No other man of his day could have written it" quite like this. That thrilling repetition of the word "wild," and that "now" at the end of the fourth line, reminding me so touchingly of the school days when one inserted *nunc* to fill an awkward gap in a hexameter, and rhyming, moreover, with "snow"—these were fascinating touches. Call this *minor* poetry! as Mr. Le Gallienne puts it. This particular carol, however, does not appear in the immortal volume. So instead of pursuing it, let me take another which does appear :—

Deep, deep snow,
Wild, wild wind,
Dark, dark night, and lo,
Where shall we shepherds go
God's Son to find?

See, shepherds, see !
O'er Bethlehem Town,
What may this glory be ?
Faint not, but hasten ye ;
Thither go down.

Now what I should have said about this was that such an exceedingly ugly metre might just have been defended if Mr. Image had been obliged on strict compulsion to find words and rhymes for a very jerky tune. It would never have occurred to me that the thing could be seriously treated by itself as literature or poetry. Similarly with this :

Gaudeamus, gaudeamus,
 Born is God's Son :
 Gaudeamus, gaudeamus,
 Hell's reign is done :
 Gaudeamus omnes,
 Heaven is begun !

Again, just passable words for the kind of tune that goes to, a carol. Much of my little volume, I find, is filled with exercises of this kind. There are also one or two devotional pieces which show culture and, as the *Saturday Reviewer* says, mingle the spiritual with the pagan as "mutually permissive instincts." This equipoise finds expression in a little poem called "Her Confirmation," where the transition is rather abrupt :—

Beneath a lawn translucent crown
 Her lovely curls conceal their brown ;
 Her wanton eyes are fastened, even,
 Demurely down.
 And that delicious mouth of rose
 No words, no smile may discompose :
 All of her feels the approaching awe
 And silent grows.
 Come, then, Thou noiseless Spirit, and rest
 Here, where she waits thee for her guest :
 Pass not, but sweetly onward draw,
 Till heaven's possessed !

Now, as I am a Philistine, this offends me. I don't mind the "wanton eyes" or the "delicious mouth of rose," but the transition from this amorous note to the spiritual invocation of the last stanza does not seem to me good poetry or good taste, notwithstanding the "mutually permissive instincts." However, let me give one of the

passages on which the *Saturday Reviewer* relies to confer immortality upon Mr. Selwyn Image :—

Like a willow, like a reed,
Is my Love's grace :
And her face,

Like a soft, pale-petalled, rose :
And my Love's breast,
Like the rest

Of a snow-drift, calm and white :
And to kiss there !
Ah ! what compare,

Can I find in rhyme for that ;
Where is Love's own
Jewelled throne ?

This is to "outlive most contemporary literature." In my ignorance I should have supposed that Mr. Andrew Lang could do about six like that in an hour, only I am sure that Mr. Lang would not have followed "kiss there" with "compare" (query=comparison?), and I think he would have found something better to rhyme with "breast" than "rest," which, in the second stanza, is simply otiose. For "like the rest of a snow-drift" is an awkward expression, whether it means a snow-drift at rest or the remaining part of a snow-drift, or simply a snow-drift.

For my part, I would not for the world go out of the way to mispraise Mr. Image or any of Mr. Le Gallienne's young men. I like enthusiasms, and I see in these a certain reaction from the assumption of the old reviewers that whenever a parcel of poetry was sent them it must necessarily be guyed to make amusing copy. That was hard lines on the poets, and some of them, I have no doubt, suffered cruelly from it. But I doubt if any really good poet was ever killed by it, or ever failed to turn the tables on his reviewer in later days. The other extreme, that of the new log-rolling, will in all probability, it seems to me, end in making them all look extremely silly, and perhaps spoil their work by giving them an inordinate opinion of modest and meritorious efforts. A worse result is that it lowers the whole standard of criticism. When a master does appear, there will be no adjectives left for him, and the public having its sense of excellence wholly confused by extravagant praise of the second or third best, will neither recognise him nor believe the critics who speak with discernment. It will be the fable of wolf inverted.

Again, when I am asked to believe that a few weeks of 1894 have produced "a body of achievement which few decades in

the literature of the country have surpassed," my instinct is to believe that my critic is mistaken, rather than that the law of probabilities has been strained to this miraculous extent. And when my critic goes on to compare some precious "gold and purple stuff" by a modern young man to Milton's "Areopagitica," my next instinct is to wonder whether he has read, or if he has read, has not wholly forgotten, the "Areopagitica." I wonder next how extensive his knowledge may be of the Caroline lyricists who furnish forth another comparison, and lastly, even of Shakespeare, who is impressed to illustrate the audacious genius of a third. Finally, another and more personal thought occurs to me. If these young men take to writing signed articles about each other, is it not possible that they will feel under an obligation to return the compliments which they have received, and, if so, shall we not have the new log-rolling turning up in all corners of the Press, leading the public to the impression that there is a consensus of expert opinion about the sun-like genius of Mr. X, the Elizabethan talents of Mr. Y, and the Miltonic organ voice of Mr. Z?

III.—NOVELISTS AND CRITICS.

However much the Philistine may feel embarrassed by the new crowd of major poets, an even greater embarrassment awaits him when he endeavours to pick his way among the throng of great new novelists. Here there are so many names, that space would fail if I endeavoured to set out their characters as I have done in the case of the poets. It is a weekly occurrence to be told that a new novel by a new writer is "the most notable achievement in this kind of fiction for many years." I learn, however, from my various critics that there have been at least six works published this year which I gather deserve the rank of classics. The *Athenæum* selects three for me. These are :—

"ESTHER WATERS," BY GEORGE MOORE.—"An immense composition, planned and developed with infinite patience and skill ; faultless in construction, packed with human knowledge and direct observation, founded on elemental human affections, works out great moral ideas, but at the same time as impersonal as Flaubert ; contains one character which is one of the most healthy and English in fiction."

"ELDER CONKLIN," BY FRANK HARRIS.—"A revelation alike of the talent of a new writer and the existence of new types of character. Its qualities are precisely those in which English fiction is most lacking : the qualities of artistic economy, of exact emphasis, of severe impersonality, of entire devotion to reality, whether that reality is clean or muddy, heroic or sordid."

"LORD ORMONT AND HIS AMINTA," BY GEORGE MEREDITH.—Does not "fail of the old nobility and sweetness, and bright vitality and exquisiteness, of humanity," &c., &c.

The list is so far a concession to my feelings as to include one acknowledged master, and one other of which even a Philistine may have a reasonably high opinion. Now let me pass to a second list, that of Mr. Arthur Waugh, in the *Weekly Sun*, from whom I have already quoted.

He also grants Mr. George Meredith a unique and unimpugned position, but his other selections are different. They include :—

"THE MANXMAN," BY MR. HALL CAINE.—The "*coup* of the year"; a great book and one that will surely live. The big success of the year; his chance for the future is immense.

"THE KING OF THE SCHNORRERS," BY MR. ZANGWILL.—Hardly his best work, but "when *To-Day* releases 'the Master' from its six months' silence, it may be that we shall find in it another 'Children of the Ghetto.' It is hard to say what Mr. Zangwill may not do in the future."

"TRILBY," BY MR. DU MAURIER, surpasses "The Triumphs of Peter Ibbetson," . . . "a novel that stands not only high in the record of the year, but in an honoured position in the fiction of the period, human nature and subtle imagination playing vividly across its subtle pages."

"THE PRISONER OF ZENDA," BY ANTHONY HOPE, "has abundantly justified Mr. Arrowsmith's confidence." . . . "An admirable romance. Mr. Hope's day is only at the dawn . . . the world is all before him . . . he may well be left to the future with every certainty of high success."

"THE RAIDERS AND THE SUNBONNET," BY MR. S. R. CROCKETT.—A discovery of the present year, and a welcome one. If he can find patience to husband his resources, Mr. Crockett will be with us when many a more meteoric reputation is in ashes and forgetfulness.

"ENGLISH EPISODES," BY MR. FREDERICK WEDMORE.—"Mr. Wedmore has enriched himself in an entirely individual corner. He is alone in the fiction of the hour as master of a tenderly reticent art, working in subdued colours with no common effect, an impressionist who never fails of an impression."

"MAELCHO," BY MISS EMILY LAWLESS.—A story instinct with the spirit of its age, alive with interest, and clothed with literary charm.

"TALES OF MEAN STREETS," BY MR. ARTHUR MORRISON.—"Illumined the misery and degradation of the East End in a volume of short stories, which in the opinion of some critics contained work as remarkable as any that has been put forth this season. To temper unflinching realism with the judgment of the finished artist is to achieve a feat rarely accomplished in these days of rapid writing, and the present reviewer has no hesitation in saying that he found Mr. Morrison's work among the most suggestive and stimulating pieces of literature he has encountered for many a week.

Here I stop, not because Mr. Waugh's list, but because my space, is exhausted. There are John Oliver Hobbes and Sarah Grand (who has done one thing this year "which she has never excelled," and who may "reasonably be expected to repeat the success of 'The Heavenly Twins'").

There are Mr. Anstey, Mr. Gilbert Parker, and Mr. Stanley Weyman, not to mention Mr. Stevenson, Mr. Kipling, Mrs. Humphry Ward, Mr. Thomas Hardy, Mr. Blackmore, and the throng of old novelists who are cherished of us Philistines. All these are encouraged, not, it is true, in the language which is applied to the great new luminaries, but with polite eulogy or gentle chiding.

Comparing my two authorities before passing on, I find that they agree upon one point and hardly any other. They both hail Mr. Wedmore's talent. According to Mr. Waugh, Mr. Wedmore "is enniching himself in an entirely individual corner," which, I gather from the context, is high praise, though, if reticence is his speciality. I hope Mr. Wedmore will not make a corner in that. The *Athenæum* tells me that Mr. Wedmore is "a writer in whom delicacy of literary touch is united with an almost disembodied fineness of sentiment." If one applied the method of agreement, then, Mr. Wedmore would be the man of the year. In almost all other respects my critics disagree about these masterpieces. Notwithstanding that "he has abundantly justified Mr. Arrowsmith's confidence," the *Athenæum* reproaches Mr. Anthony Hope with "his brilliant dialogue and his inability to construct a story," which makes a Philistine wonder if the *Athenæum* can possibly have read the "Prisoner of Zenda." The same authority dismisses Mr. Zangwill, Mrs. Humphry Ward, and Mr. du Maurier with the suggestion that they have every kind of merit except the particular kind on which they pride themselves, viz., ability to write a story. That is usually the attitude of one school towards another. The "new artists," in precisely the same spirit, used handsomely to allow that Academicians could do all manner of things except paint pictures.

What particularly interests me in Mr. Waugh is that he is not content with the modest function of the old reviewers—that of criticising the work in hand, but he also dispenses futures and immortalities with no sparing hand to his various *protèges*. "A great book, and one that will surely live," he exclaims to Mr. Hall Caine; "his chance for the future is immense." So also Mr. Anthony Hope is "left to the future with every certainty of high success," and Mr.

Crockett is granted a conditional immortality:—"If he can find patience to husband his resources, he will be with us when many a more meteoric reputation is in ashes and forgetfulness." This puzzled me a little at first, for Mr. Crockett's reputation rested mainly, if not wholly, on one book, and I did not see much opportunity for others to be "more meteoric." That, however, was my stupidity, for in these days men mount to fame on a *Yellow Book* article, or a Christmas carol. Next comes Mr. Zangwill, who apparently published nothing in book-form last year; but that is no reason why he should be left out, for "it is hard to say what Mr. Zangwill may not do in the future." No doubt it is, but the article professes to be dealing with the past—the fiction of 1894. The new critic's rule in reviewing the literature of the year is apparently to drag your man in at all costs. If he has done anything, well and good; if not, bring him out, nevertheless, and talk about his future.

Mr. Waugh and the *Athenæum* have provided me with convenient examples, but they are in no way out of the common. I run my eye along the literary columns of daily and weekly papers, and discover that one book is "a portentous sign of our times"; that another has at last "opened the floodgates of the human heart"; that a third is "elemental," like Shakespeare and Goethe; that many more are entirely new and original manifestations of genius. I cannot help noticing, also, that in some quarters one set of authors are persistently run down, and others persistently run up; and, though I have heard many weighty things said in favour of signed as against unsigned criticism, yet the signed criticism seems to sin above all others in extravagant eulogy of everything it touches. A favourable review, critics tell me, is the most difficult of all kinds to write. It is so easy to be amusing when you slate a book, so difficult to be even interesting when you praise in moderation. Whether that is the reason, or another, the discerning review which praises moderate work in moderation is with difficulty to be found in modern literary criticism. Everyone seems concerned in running his own set of geniuses against somebody else's set of genuises, and the reviewer who knows his business is apparently expected to discover a first-class luminary every fortnight. Under these circumstances, a clever young man does badly nowadays if he is not hailed as an

immortal by some lynx-eyed critic within ten days of his first appearance.

On the the other side the most respectable of the Old Critics seem to have frankly given up the task of criticising the modern social novel ; it they notice it at all it is just to jibe at it as a dull thing and of no account. In fiction they call for romance, adventure, blood ; and to some of us it seems that they will take any quantity of the last commodity in composition for the first two. But while the Old Critics cry " blood," the New ones reply " flesh and blood," and to some of us again it seems that when they say " flesh and blood " they mean flesh. They are in revolt against the old masters ; Jane Austen, Dickens, Thackeray, and all the rest are meat for babes or domestic Philistines that rear healthy families and pay regular pew-rents. They want the " throbbing, palpitating, revolting," and generally carnal " self." As the New Critics talked of " *plein air*," so do these gentlemen talk of " *humanity*." They want something " *frankly human*," and whenever one of their young men (or young women) produces a worthless and disgusting little story they fall on his neck and tell him that there never was such a masterpiece since the world began. It is called " *courageous, passionate, and human*," and the more absolutely it is out of his own head, the profounder is said to be its truth and its " *psychology*."

So at least it seems to a Philistine who fights gallantly to read without prejudice what his critics recommend him. Every theory should have a fair trial, even the theory which declares that art has nothing to do with morals. But indecency according to a theory is of all kinds the most offensive. It has none of the antiseptic qualities which carry us through when the big men, Smollett, Sterne, or Fielding, break out into something racy and sinful. It is instead a miasmatic and drawing-room kind of impurity which dallies with strange sins and delights in " *exquisitely morbid* " suggestions. The man or woman who does it, always, of course, has the loftiest aims, but I wonder sometimes whether he (or she) has a qualm when he sees the " *courageous* " passage taken from its context and set out in solitude to catch the halfpenny or penny or Sunday reader.

To follow this last point in detail is a task which I must postpone for a short time. A little later I shall venture a few illustrations of the wild absurdity into which the un-moral theory of art is leading certain "new writers" with the high approval of their critics. Sometimes, I confess, in reading these productions I sigh for the old slaughterous critics who used to say rather straight things about productions of this kind. In these days they have a clamorous welcome from one class of critics who praise them for their power, their passion, their psychology, their eloquence, and their "bravery," while the "old critics," with a nervous dread of not seeming up to date, chime in with a perfunctory compliment to their literary qualities, "however perverted." These "brave" people, I observe, are generally anonymous or pseudonymous (I am not speaking here of the "Pseudonyms"), and though there is no complaint to make about that, I fail to see wherein their "courage" consists. It can hardly be called "true heroism" to write nasty stories under a false name.

A REPLY BY MR. LE GALLIENNE.

My Dear Sir,—If “The Philistine” has quite finished decorating your columns with my name, I would like a word. It shall, I promise, be as short as possible, for this best of all possible reasons—that, while “The Philistine” is no doubt paid handsomely for his genial attack upon me, I shall probably have to find my own costs for the defence. Of all literary vices, perhaps writing for nothing is the worst. The only possible excuse for writing at all is that, for some of us, there is no other way of keeping our wives and families. Anyone, therefore, who is depraved enough to write for nothing is an enemy of the Society of Authors.

First, let me assure “The Philistine” that I feel certain that his articles were inspired by a real passion for the public good. I hope the public will not attribute to him any merely personal motives, or think that he had the smallest intention of causing me pain. I know that he couldn’t have had—else surely I could not have read his articles with such unalloyed pleasure—my only regret being that, in this instance, a new prose-writer had discovered me, instead of my discovering him. I have never met a writer of, shall I say, such theosophic prose since the brilliant articles on the Theosophical Society which recently added so much to the gaiety of newspapers. Perhaps that is why he treats me occasionally as though I were a Mahatma, but I’m sure it is quite unintentional. And that reminds me to suggest a much better title for his articles, when they are reissued as an “Extra,” namely: “Seven at a Blow: or, The Minor Poet Unveiled.” For really “The New Log-rolling” is not a good title.* As a matter of business, the public hardly know what “log-rolling” means. If it has any significance to them, it is an indirect association with Captain Coe and the *Star*. Then—and this is a consideration which will appeal to any Philistine—it is not true! So far as I can make out (and I have read “The Philistine” with only less care than delight), he adduces no single instance of log-rolling, as I have been brought up to understand it.

* “The Philistine,” as the reader will have seen, has conceded this point. He has no desire to press the word “log-rolling,” if it is open to misunderstanding or causes offence.

The word implies dishonest praise—praise bestowed by one incompetent in acknowledgment of praise received from another incompetent. It can, therefore, hardly apply to honest praise, and to so apply it is a curious use of American.

Now listen to a few facts, though "The Philistine's" "prose fancies" are much more engaging:—

(1) Mr. John Eglinton (to whom I apologise for thus dragging him into the light of day and the din of battle) is entirely unknown to me. For all I know, his name may be a pseudonym, and if he has written about *me* anywhere, he has, so far as I know, reviewed me unawares.

(2) Though I am proud of the privilege to call most of the poets on "The Philistine's" list my friends, they only became friends after my having reviewed their books—a circumstance so uncommon in present-day literature that it is surely to be welcomed as a saving grace of human nature. And I am able, with a couple of slight exceptions, to positively exonerate them from the crime of praising me in return! Mr. Davidson did, I believe, in his capacity as a journalist, write one notice of my "Prose Fancies," and Mr. Gale has on two occasions judiciously mingled "praise and blame" in the columns of the *Literary World*.

I am unconscious of any more outrageous bribery and corruption.

(3) Mr. Arthur Waugh and I became friends soon after the publication of his "Life of Tennyson," but we are friends, I assure you, from none but the purest motives. I'm sure we're sorry, but we can't help rather liking each other. Surely it is hard if—in this world of Philistines—the poor literary man may not herd with his kind.

(4) It is surely better to over-praise a contemporary than to meanly belittle him. And surely it is possible that a man's special gift may be suffered to "remind" you of Milton and Shakespeare without extravagant implications that the smaller writer thus suggesting those great writers equals them in all their gifts. Mr. Francis Thompson, I repeat, has a gift of fantastic hyperbole, a courageous way of transforming the ridiculous into the sublime, which I don't remember being done in quite so striking a way out of Shakespeare; and I *have* read my Donne and Cartwright. But to say that is not to imply that he could have created Hamlet or Falstaff. Similarly, to say that the stately scheme of Mr.

Eglinton's prose reminds one of the "Areopagitica" does not necessarily imply that Mr. Eglinton is a reincarnation of Milton. Moreover, for all "The Philistine's" assumption of superior learning, I venture still to think that I was right in suggesting that the "Areopagitica" was comparatively disregarded on its publication. The battle of the liberty of the Press was fought and won entirely independently of it: but when it had been won, the victors didn't mind decorating themselves, and no doubt taking the credit of Milton's prose. The "Areopagitica" became, so to say, the accepted manifesto of the party, but only after the victory had been won by less distinguished and more ordinary Parliamentary procedure. In imagining that Milton's tract won the battle, "The Philistine" relies too confidently on obsolete editions of elementary school-books.

(5) Has it not happened that all the poets whom I have been charged with appreciating have been praised in like manner elsewhere, and have now been accepted (that is, bought) by the public at large? "The Philistine" is surely not prepared to say that they are not poets at all. I and others may have magnified them somewhat, but so long as they have some real poetry in their volumes, surely it is not a capital offence, in the daily exercise of one's critical duties, to have endeavoured to make the public aware of it—even at the risk of unduly raising one's voice. The most successful volume of "minor verse" is not exactly a gold mine, and if the "minor poet" latterly gets most of the "cry," it is such pluralists of journalism as "The Philistine" that get all the "wool." The most successful volume of "minor verse" makes nothing commercially compared with what jealous and hard-hearted critics make out of butchering it.

(6) To object to the term "minor poet" does not imply that a man is a "great" poet, for the term "minor poet" has in our day become distorted—has, in fact, taken the place of "poetaster," which practically means no poet at all. Anyone who would call any of the poets in "The Philistine's" list poetasters would only illustrate his own impertinent ignorance. Messrs. Watson and Davidson may be poets of what magnitude you please, but *poets* they certainly are, and they will be read when their critics—"lie howling."

(7) One would have thought that the experience of generations

would have taught "The Philistine" the futility of thus kicking against the pricks. Mr. Watson and Mr. Davidson may not be equal to Tennyson and Browning—personally I don't for a moment think they are—but they at least have this encouraging resemblance to their great forerunners, in that they are attacked and belittled in the same paltry, small-minded fashion by the minor, the microscopical critic of the day.

So soon as any new literary dynasty is founded, there is always this same forlorn insurrection of the unsuccessful. We had the same thing a few years ago, when Messrs. Lang, Dobson, and Gosse were accused of loving each other. Nobody accuses them of it now. They have gone on quietly doing their work, and have taken their place in modern letters.

Indeed, if I had only thought of it before, it would have saved me time and money to copy out, for the benefit of "The Philistine," passages from various articles and letters on the ethics of "log-rolling," by Mr. Andrew Lang—who said the last word on this hackneyed subject years ago. No history repeats itself so consistently as literary history—a truth which should make "The Philistine" pause ere it be too late. There are critics thinking a good deal of themselves at this moment whose only chance of remembrance in a hundred years will be that they did their best to cut the throats of the young poets of their time; literary homicides whose howls of torment will be the only clarions of their fame. Some there will be who will be remembered, inasmuch as in their humble way they said a good word for *les jeunes* of the nineteenth-century-end renaissance, instead of trying to bludgeon them down or take the bread from their mouths.

Gifford, and Jeffrey, and Christopher North, and countless other literary homicides are waiting, with burning welcome, for—well, we won't mention names. There shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

(8) Sneers against Mr. Grant Allen are as silly as must always be the sneers of a little man against a greater. And, finally, I may add that a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Minor Poets is on foot, and that subscriptions and donations may be sent to yours sincerely,

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.

Mulberry Cottage, Brentford, W., January 18.

OTHER REPLIES AND CRITICISMS.

The letters and other articles contained in the following pages appeared in THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE after the publication of the preceding chapters.

A COMMENT ON MR. LE GALLIENNE.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—“The Philistine” may have a word of his own to say to Mr. Le Gallienne, but as an average reader of prose and verse, both old and new, I cannot help asking you for space to observe how utterly inadequate is this reply to your contributor’s timely and necessary strictures. In spite of the beginning and end of his letter, it may yet be possible that Mr. Le Gallienne has a vein of humour; but his eight arguments seem to prove incontestably that he is void of what one generally understands by the critical faculty. For see what they come to:—

1. He is unacquainted with one of “The Philistine’s” list of minor poets or prose writes on whom he has lavished extravagant praise; therefore he cannot be a log-roller.

2—3. But he has got to know the rest by praising them, and two of them have already praised him in return. *Habemus confitentem!* Let him take heart; he may know the other one soon, and all the rest may praise him. Mr. Le Gallienne is doubtless as honest as the day, but his experience shows that log-rolling does not imply the previous acquaintance of the rollers.

4. “It is surely better to over-praise a contemporary than to meanly belittle him.” But it is better still to do neither. And certainly it is better for literature, and kinder to young authors, to expose the weaknesses of their first attempts than to make them ridiculous by comparing them to Shakespeare and Milton.

5—6. “‘The Philistine’ is surely not prepared to say that” the over-praised minor poets “are not poets at all.” The general reading public is quite prepared to say that, so far as their first attempts are con-

cerned, they are only poets of a kind that one can pick up by the fifty. The "magnifying" panegyrists (it is Mr. Le Gallienne's term) defeat their own object. The rapidity and ease with which they think up new poets only prove that culture of that sort is widespread, that "all can grow the flower now, for all have got the seed." As well call a sixth-form boy a modern Horace or a new Theocritus because he can write excellent verses in Latin and Greek.

7—8. Every great poet, or group of great poets, has been succeeded by a school of pupils and imitators; and the comical manner in which their contemporaries overpraised them is familiar to students of literature. The log-rollers are continuing our literary history in the inevitable sequence—and the same sequence will inevitably bring us new "Baviads" to pin them to the cork.

Apparently Mr. Le Gallienne would be astonished to find that most of us still expect the true critic to point out the short-comings as well as the merits of a work of art, and if there must be a choice, to strengthen the beginner by strictures rather than to enervate him by flattery. This is not "butchery," but honest and useful literary judgment—an absolutely indispensable discipline, if the literature of our day is to retain one shred of its dignity.—I am, Sir, &c., S.

IN DEFENCE OF THE POETS.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson, in a recently-published letter to Mr. Le Gallienne (see *Illustrated London News*, January 12), said: "I do not know that I am sensitive to criticism if it be hostile; I am sensitive indeed when it is friendly, and when I read such criticism as yours I am emboldened to go on and praise God." If Mr. Le Gallienne's criticism could move and encourage such a man as R.L.S., who shall blame him for applying the like method to the work of younger men? Poets are naturally responsive to appreciation and praise, especially in their youth, the golden age of poetry. They are sensitive plants. In many instances men of the passing generation, from a lack of appreciation as poets, turned critics, and, forgetting they were nightingales, became the mocking-birds of song. It is perfectly appalling to contemplate what brutal and ignorant criticism, and, I fear, unenlightened publishing, have done to suppress poetry, which by its nature is almost an exotic. Is it

not highly probable that Keats, Matthew Arnold, and Clough would have written more, and probably finer work, had they received more encouragement?

Some time ago a letter of Mr. Meredith's came into my possession, dated about the time of the publication of "The Shaving of Shagpat," offering a volume of poems to a well-known publisher. On my asking Mr. Meredith, one day, the fate of this volume, he replied, "At the time I was so disgusted at no publisher being willing to take it, that I destroyed the MS., and I have now forgotten every line." Who can estimate what a national loss we have sustained through this one act? Supposing, again, that Mr. Henley had found a sympathetic publisher in the seventies, when so many of his fine poems were written, how much more might he not have given us by now?

Since Mr. Le Gallienne wrote, for *Lippincott's Magazine*, in 1890, an appreciation of Mr. Meredith's "Modern Love" (afterwards reprinted in "George Meredith: Some Characteristics"), that book, though out of print for thirty years, was almost immediately re-issued in England and America. Is it too much to claim for Mr. Le Gallienne a share in the re-publication? Since that time no book of verse of any importance has been issued without receiving suggestive and generous criticism from him.

What has "Philistine" been doing since 1891, when this new log-rolling began—if log-rolling is the term for the action of a man who proclaims the genuine admiration he feels for another man's work, more especially when that other man happens to be unknown to the writer or to fame. I await with interest the production of any evidence, however slight, showing that Mr. John Davidson, Mr. Norman Gale, Mr. Alfred Hayes, Mr. Rudyard Kipling, Mr. Arthur Symons, Mr. Francis Thompson, Mr. William Watson, or Mr. W. B. Yeats have written, signed or unsigned, praise of Mr. Le Gallienne, and I am in a position to say that at least six of the poets named have never written a line about him. Log-rolling, as I understand it, resolves itself into the vulgarism—which I hope "Philistine" will pardon—of "you scratch me and I'll scratch you." In this case all the "scratching" has been on one side, in itself a remarkable tribute to the inevitableness of Mr. Le Gallienne's criticism, and to his high sense of justice, regardless even of any rivalry.

It is not surprising that "Philistine," who admits that he was but "just beginning to adjust himself to the belief that Mr. W. Watson was winning

his claim to be called a poet without any invidious qualification," should regard such men as John Davidson, Norman Gale, Francis Thompson, and W. B. Yeats as portentous births of the last weeks of 1894.

To say that "*one week* brought us Mr. Davidson, whose claim to be a poet of the highest order, I was informed in several quarters could only be denied at the expense of my credit for judgment and taste," can only be an exposure of "Philistine's" ignorance, not merely of Mr. Le Gallienne's critical work (which is unpardonable in a man who quotes so freely from him), but also of the history of the literature of the last ten years, during which time Mr. Davidson has published twelve books, the five last of which were received with marked favour by all the principal literary journals.

"Philistine" has surely misunderstood Mr. Le Gallienne's article in the *Weekly Sun*, which did not deal with the poets of the year, but with the younger of the living poets. "The younger group, the poets, perhaps, rather of to-morrow than to-day!—these are my theme—": the younger group consisting of Mr. Davidson, Mr. Gale, Mr. Hayes, Mr. Kipling, Mr. Symons, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Watson, and Mr. Yeats. Great men grow in clumps like primroses, as Alexander Smith says in "Dreamthorp."

"Philistine" seems to be great on statistics, while I must claim to be profoundly ignorant of the subject, though I remember Mr. Traill dealt with sixty writers in his famous *Nineteenth Century* article on the Minor Poets. If Mr. Le Gallienne includes but eight, surely this is not extravagant. If I am wrong in my figures "Philistine" will perhaps correct me. Mr. Le Gallienne is too well informed to make it necessary for me to point out the fact that five of the eight poets he named did not produce any books of verse during 1894.

A true critic forms his judgment from the book before him. "Philistine" is obviously unable to form an opinion for himself, and evidently takes his cue from the public appreciation and the "bulk" of the work—in other words, judges of merit by weight. He seems to be apprehensive as to what will happen when a master *does* appear—another evidence of his ignorance of contemporary poetry. He need not be alarmed. There are always men able to welcome and pilot the new-comer—men like Mr. Grant Allen, Mr. Henley and Mr. Lang. The new-comer safely convoyed, "Philistine" will doubtless soon "adjust" himself to the popular belief. I wonder if "Philistine" would ever have heard of Mr. Bridges without the aid of Mr. Lang?

Nothing is so difficult as to get a hearing for poetry, and surely we owe a debt of gratitude to the man who sifts the wheat from the chaff, and generously and eloquently draws our attention to any new writer. Mr. Le Gallienne began to write his appreciations of Mr. Watson in 1891, of Mr. Davidson and Mr. Gale in 1892, since which time he has never lost an opportunity of praising, *with discrimination*, the greatness or charm of these writers, in spite of the ridicule and contempt of Philistines.

I venture to say that English poetry of the last few years owes more to the constant appreciation of Mr. Le Gallienne than any number of Philistines will ever understand, or the poets and their lovers be ever able to repay.

I began this letter with a quotation from Mr. Stevenson, and will conclude with another from the same letter. "You are to conceive me as only too ready to make the acquaintance of a man who loves good literature and can make it. . . . You are still young, and you may live to do much. . . . There is trouble coming, I think; and you may have to hold the fort for us in evil days" [even against Philistines?].—I am, Sir, yours obediently.

A READER OF MODERN POETRY.

THE WAIL OF THE POETS.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—As an author and lover of literature, and as a great reader of poetry, I was under the impression that what was sadly needed was the just and discriminating criticism which we now, fortunately, receive from the pens of Mr. Le Gallienne and a few others. The real enemies to the progress of literature are, in my opinion, Philistines and "unenlightened publishers." Critics of the stamp of Mr. Le Gallienne are the lights fitly shining amidst a dense gloom of ignorance and jealousy. I have the profoundest admiration of the latter gentleman's critical ability and his high sense of justice, and modern literature owes a debt to him which it cannot hope to repay.

There is a significant fact which should be brought to the notice of all Philistines. Authors of minor verse have to publish at their own expense the works which they produce. Unless criticism be favourable, they receive absolutely no help or encouragement from publishers. On the contrary, they meet with the discouragement which kills. I have experienced it, and I can

assure you, Sir, it requires almost superhuman effort to support the trial. The critic alone has the power to relax the stern countenance of the "unenlightened publisher," and it is to him literature must look as its true friend. Therefore—and let "Philistine" take this to heart—unless "the master" have sufficient private funds to bring out his work, the world will never see it. It will have the same fate as Mr. Meredith's book of verse, to which allusion has been made by a previous correspondent.

I am an obscure writer of minor verse, and have received but the "faint praise which damns." Although Hope will lead me on, I spend hard-earned money upon the production of my works, convinced that a day will come when praise and recognition will reward me. To Mr. Le Gallienne I owe nothing, though I have a faint idea that an unsigned favourable criticism was really his. At any rate, it has done me very little good. Mr. Le Gallienne's magnanimity and justice rouse in me emotions I cannot express. It is the Beauty I, as a poet, am compelled to worship. It sheds a glory over present-day criticism which Philistine littleness is powerless to bedim. I think all lovers of literature may reposefully entrust the dignity and progress of English poetry to Mr. Le Gallienne and other similarly high-minded critics.—Yours, &c.,

Woodford, January 22.

ONE WHO IS GRATEFUL.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—Mr. Le Gallienne's little joke about the formation of a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Minor Poets would be much more applicable to the case of those luckless versifiers (among whom I unhappily include myself) who, giving their work to the public, receive no notice nor help from (discriminating?) critics, whose business it should be to guide the public taste, than if applied to the noble Seven whose merits have been so enthusiastically blazoned to the world by Mr. Le Gallienne's facile pen. I plead the cause of the "great unknown," who for some occult reason are passed over and ignored by the Press, for what chance have their works of winning notice of the public if critics persistently "taboo" their efforts? Log-rolling, as I understand it, means an interchange of compliments (and flatteries) between authors who write themselves into temporary and meretricious fame by these unworthy means. But if a man cannot climb the ladder in fairer ways he had better remain at the bottom.

I would not give a brass button for such cheap renown.—Yours, &c.,
16, Porchester-gardens, W., January 21.

J. A. COUPLAND.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—Mr. Coupland asks a very pertinent question as to the great army of unknown poets. Though not altogether an unknown poet, my own experience will be suggestive.

When I first published "The Angel of Love," that work, as is well known, secured the high eulogy of Cardinal Newman and many other eminent men. The work was also highly praised in the *Academy* and other high-class organs.

But since the advent of the New Criticism I have published several works, sending out more than a hundred copies to the various papers with this result: Scarcely a single notice, and, in the majority of instances, not even an acknowledgment in the "list of books received."

When the master poet arrives it is asked what superlatives will there be left for him? He will be simply boycotted, as more than one has been already. Is it likely that seedy garments will match kindly in the proximity of new ones that invite invidious comparisons? I do not accuse the present incompetent weaklings of dishonesty, but I note the conspiracy of silence resulting from the perhaps unconscious freemasonry of stupidity, with its self-protecting clannishness. I notice a favourite word "inevitableness" in use by some criticasters and poetasters. This word seems to be the Mesopotamia of the minors, and it seems cruel to deprive them of their "chewing-gum." But I would venture to say that we want more of the *intransmutable* word and less of the *inevitable* one, which is only a synonym for slang. It is not possible to write poetry on the "frankly pagan," frankly nasty, frankly self-altitudinous principle, whatever Mr. Le Gallienne may think to the contrary.—Yours truly,

7, Broad street-corner, Birmingham,

R. Y. STURGES.

January 22.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—Be not deceived with the illusion that "log-rolling" brings cash to the rhymster! The age is Materialistic. Pork chops are preferred to poetry. The occupation of the swine-slaughterer is now in the ascendant. The essential function of the muse is a *spirituelle* endeavour to cool the animal in man; to harmonise and give metrical emphasis to beautiful and elevating thoughts. But a gross age must needs crush out the sweet, clean ministrations of the poet. As someone has well said:—

All creation's lovely—
Only man is vile.

Here we have the psychological secret of the growing unpopularity of poetry—which was reasonably at its height, and its best, in the ages of Faith.

What profiteth it, if a man write a lot of verse, and lose grip over the sinew-won almighty dollar? Real poets, like Keats, Keble, Ken, Milton, old George Herbert, Tennyson, William Watson, &c., being prophetic in temperament, must travel emotionally in advance of the crowd in purity, breadth, and dramatic vividness of thought! There ore, how is it possible for inspired verse-men to satisfy the intensely and unavoidably carnal aspirations of the meat-devouring, oath-breathing, sin-heated, gin-maddened crowd! Log-rolling may give temporary repute to natural fools, who waste time, and lose bread and wine, in frenzied verse-building. But fine friendly reviewing of poetry feeds a fellow's vanity without filling his larder. Who will dare say this is not true? In my own case, I can bear testimony to the folly of trusting to honey criticism for literary success. You will see, from the precious cuttings I enclose of critical appreciation in divers Press quarters, that I as a young man tasted, almost to sickening, of the reviewers' praise from all classes of publications. To crown all, Lord Tennyson, Edna Lyall, S. C. Hall, and others equally influential in literature, gave me prompt recognition. Not least, Mr. Gladstone wrote me as follows:—"I am overwhelmed with poetry, and little weight is to be attached to my opinion. But I will say that your sonnets show a great deal of talent and of sense."

This was a bit of powerful log-rolling by one of the finest critical intellects of the century. But I was not rich enough to advertise even short friendly reviews in newspapers of high literary status: so I published locally, quietly, in wretched paper covers, and at a loss. Therefore, farewell to metrical literature, until man can live without bread, and, on the limited diet of the skylark, ethereally get above the clouds and kiss the heavenly gates!

I once thought sonnet eruptions a divine mission. Such emotional work is a huge joke, and will remain so—in spite of log-rolling—until Religion, the Dramatic Instinct in Man, and the fine humours of Human Progress, again kiss and be friends.—Faithfully yours,

Tunbridge Wells.

JOHN T. MARKLEY.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—I agree with every word "Philistine" writes *in re* the new "Log-rolling." The whole process may be summed up in these lines:—

Yule log roll me, and I will you !
Yule tide me safely o'er the sea
 That leads to fame and fortune too,
 And *I'll* tide you—do *you* agree ?

Poetry (?) seems now to be patented by a few choice spirits who monopolise the article in books of a bilious hue and elsewhere, and outsiders must not infringe the patent—no, no !

I happen not to possess the great gift of obscurity, nor have I any turn for frantic phantasy, sickly sentiment, thinly-veiled obscenity, or spurious morality. So, though one of the best-known critics of the day called me a “most successful singer,” though Mr. Browning, and a probable laureate, praised my verse, and Mr. Traill included me in his immortal roll, I am regarded by the elect as merely a pariah prowling round the base of Parnassus !

Mr. John Davidson kindly advises me to make up my mind comfortably that no one (except the butterman) wants my poetry. Mr. Le Gallienne damns it with faint praise, as “*very* pretty,” and the Editor of the (very) *Yellow Book* is really crushing in his scorn.—Yours obediently,

A PARIAH ON PARNASSUS.

SOME COMPLAINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

“The Log-rollers’ Club.”

To the EDITOR *of* THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

DEAR SIR,—Will you allow me a word on this question of “Log-rolling” ? It is a thing I have watched for a number of years, and I look upon it as a disgrace to modern journalism. In the remarks I am about to make I do not wish it to be implied that I have any hostility to Mr. Le Gallienne. I look upon that gentleman as a very able man who has been unfortunate in his friends, and whom it would have done good to be a little longer in obscurity on account of those friends. I do not think he has succeeded in being *quite* impartial, though I believe he has tried.

But there are others of the log-rolling fraternity who have not even tried. Take an instance. There is a club—we will call it the Log-rollers’ Club. It consists, say, of a round dozen of members, all of them or nearly all belonging to the ranks of journalism. Their only rule is as follows :—“That every member of this club is a jolly good fellow, and one of the greatest geniuses that ever lived ; and that every member who

does not applaud him as such in every newspaper and periodical open to his pen shall be considered recreant and voted out of the club."

Now here is a sample of the way the thing is done. A and B are both poets (?); A produces at his own cost a book of verse, and B writes a review of it for a literary paper, applauding A as *the new poet*. A little later B likewise issues a book of poetry, and A pays him the compliment of a column of eulogy in the same review. Here is another example: C and D write a book; in it occasion is taken to introduce the name of E, and to tell the public, or such of it as reads the book, that he is a man of marvellous insight. In due course E returns the compliment of reviewing C and D's book, eulogising it and them to the height of the zenith. Again the members hit upon the happy idea of issuing a joint volume, and each and all "log-roll" and belaud each and themselves whenever and wherever they get a chance.

This is not imagination that I am writing, but literal truth. It would be very funny if it had not its dangerous side. But if you go into the business of conspiring to put yourself and a few others into the forefront of the time, you must defame others, because there is not room for all in that foremost rank. And that this is done I have had frequent experience, as have many others. It is a hard word to write, but it is true; and it behoves every man who undertakes to write criticism to consider well the religion of a literary man, and first of all to forswear log-rolling, and then to sign his name fearlessly to every line he pens.—Yours truly,

January 23.

DAINTRY.

SHOULD CRITICISM BE SIGNED?

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—All the literary world has been reading your articles under this heading, and now, I suppose, they have read Mr. Richard Le Gallienne's reply. May I suggest that, after all, not much harm would be done *if the articles were in all cases signed*? It is the imputation of impartiality attaching to the anonymous which does the mischief. There is another form of log-rolling perhaps even more noticeable than that of which your "Philistine" has complained. I refer to the eulogistic notice of publishers' works by—publishers' readers. There is at present no etiquette forbidding this, and two or three well-known living writers have, I believe, reviewed works which they had previously "read" for this or that firm. As the public

do not know who the publishers' readers are, there is again that apprehension of independence where it is not, of which I have spoken.

As you have felt it your duty to speak somewhat severely of Mr. Richard Le Gallienne, will you spare a line to approve his literary pluck, in telling his half-educated audience on the *Star* that it is after all "the small band of readers that alone matters," and that a man like Walter Pater does not depend on "circulation" for his fame? When we see our chief publishers advertising, not the literary merits of their wares, but the number of editions reached, and our chief morning "dailies" similarly proclaiming, not the names of the good writers they employ, but the mere numbers sold over the counter, I think that an insistence on what is essential and what is not is at once courageous and timely; a counterpoise to much log-rolling.—Yours obediently,

The Mall, Chiswick, January 22.

CHARLES KAINS-JACKSON.

HOW A POET OF THE DAY WAS "DISCOVERED."

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—There is a cognisable note of the distinctly precious in the way in which "One Who Is Grateful" to the high-minded theologian who condescends to write "occ." purple-and-gold stuff towards the more rapid sale of the out-put of minor poets, gives Canon Scott Holland's colleague in graver themes away. One would think there were no such people as the editors of serials and weeklies, to whom a new verse-maker—at a moderate figure—is ever an object of somewhat chastened and disciplined hope. In this connexion, may I anticipate the future biographers of a poet now well to the front, by telling the beginnings of his career of activity? Some thirty years ago I used to illustrate a now defunct "weekly," then of high rank. The poet to whom I refer, and I, were intimate. He had the ambition of, but not the gifts for, an artistic career; and he had for years wrought diligently in the art schools. Well, on a day he showed me a design, at foot of which was some verse. The drawing was poor, wooden, lifeless, and ill-executed. The verse, chiefly the fault of subject, was jejune. But it seemed to me to be the real thing. Incontinently, therefore, I rent the drawing in sunder; bidding him never again to put pencil to paper, but asking him the while if he had any more verse in stock. Though visibly hurt at my roughness, he replied, "Yes"; and I then sternly bade him bring it to me. Next

day he turned up with two short poems, which I sent on straightway to my editor, whose reply enclosed proofs, accompanied by an intimation that he was open to take any quantity of the same stuff, though he called it neither "purple" nor "gold." I next suggested to my *protégé* to send some of his stuff to other editors. He never met with a refusal, and the rest of his history belongs to the story of Victorian literature, which, all the same, owes no debt to any light, "naturally shining amidst a dense gloom of ignorance and jealousy," of higher candle-power than the, doubtless, distinctly one-horse critical ability of my then editor, and of your obedient servant,

January 23.

REACTIONIST.

GRATITUDE.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—It is due to a man who has always used his opportunities generously, that I—though I am only one of many—should put my experience on record. It is this. When I published two volumes some little time ago, two excellent reviews which were amongst the first to appear were written, as I afterwards heard, by Mr. Le Gallienne. I had not then, and I have not since, written any reviews of Mr. Le Gallienne's books. I am ashamed to defend him against accusations so coarse as those I hear of.—I am, Sir, sincerely yours,

ESSAYIST.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—There are doubtless many who, unlike myself, have not thought it worth their while to express their disgust for the gross and, I venture to think, entirely unproven charges which "The Philistine" has thought fit to make against Mr. Le Gallienne. Philistia would no doubt like it better were critics always unacquainted with the author of the book they review; unfortunately for them, under present circumstances this is impossible. Who can blame, in this age of materialism, if amid the shouts of the Philistines, David with his harp seeks the friendship of Jonathan? Surely they will need all the strength friendship can give to withstand the awful scorn and contempt of such Goliaths. Mr. Le Gallienne's aim so far, I think, has been to see the good in a book and to praise it, whether he be acquainted with the author or no. (*Vide* his criticism in the *Star* of Mr. S. Watkins and Miss Macdonnell's poems

in the *Yellow Book*, Vol. III. (This, of course, was only a brief notice, but it will serve.) He certainly does not let what he considers bad go unstripped, as witness a letter or so in the present correspondence. Curiously enough, in "George Meredith: Some Characteristics," p. 100, Mr. Le Gallienne writes as follows:—"Thus happier than the man who discovers a new novelist, the critic of poetry may reveal his latest find without danger of invasion from Philistia; only those who are really his fellows will have ears to hear, he will win that sympathy which is so passionate a need, and none the less, escape the garlic-eating brother."—I am, yours, &c.,

12, Well-walk, Hampstead, January 29.

EDWARD HUTTON.

CRITICISM TO SCALE.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

DEAR SIR,—It appears to the feeble glimmer of my intelligence that the great want in our critical apparatus lies in this, that the same three degrees of comparison and limited stock of adjectives have to serve whether the subject be Shakespeare or a schoolboy's theme. Cannot criticism take a hint from other arts and append a scale? By this means the draftsman delineates objects of varying hugeness upon a limited sheet of paper, while the musician determines the time-value of his crotchet by the divisions of the metronome. But for the present purpose I suggest as most suitable the phraseology of the microscopist, who, in describing what he has seen, mentions the power of his instrument in terms of linear enlargement, so that our critic, to his appreciation of a friend, whose work reminds him of the purity of Shakespeare and the subtle sweetness of Milton, together with a charm wholly its own and ineffable, would append the note "magnification 1,000 diameters."—Your humble servant,

RUSHLIGHT.

SOME MORE CURIOSITIES OF CRITICISM.

By ANOTHER PHILISTINE.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—By "Philistine's" remarks on the *Athenæum* notice of Mr. Selwyn Image's "Carols and Poems" appearing almost simultaneously with the publication of the volume, and with another notice in the

Saturday Review headed "A New Poet," I was led to refer to the *Athenæum* notice, which I found in the summary of "The Literature of the Year 1894." Somewhat perplexed by the general tone of this summary, I consulted the *Athenæum* summary for the year 1893, and the volumes for 1893 and 1894 generally. I arrived at some curious conclusions. The summaries, which one would have imagined would have epitomised the verdicts of the *Athenæum* itself for the previous twelve months, omitted altogether mention of many books which had been dealt with at considerable length, and accorded high praise in the review columns. Further, they gave honourable place to writers whose books had either been entirely ignored by the journal, or but scurvily treated.

In 1893, for instance, the *Athenæum* said of "Ships that Pass in the Night," amongst much that space will not allow me to quote equally laudatory: "It would be difficult to meet with anything crisper and more fascinating in the way of character and effects of dialogue and scenery. . . . From the title almost to the final word we like the book." And of "A Comedy of Masks" it said: "There is certainly a faint flavour of humour in the dialogue. . . . Messrs. Dowson and Moore's tragi-comedy, in short, is subtle and interesting rather than convincing."

Now turn to the summary.

Mention of "Ships that Pass in the Night" there is none, whilst the writer of the summary speaks of "A Comedy of Masks" thus: "In the manner of its writing, in its general handling of character, it is fine, assured, masterly; in a word, it is a piece of literature."

The summary, so far as prose fiction is concerned, concludes with this passage: "Not to the credit of English letters, we must say that by far the most remarkable novel which has appeared in English during the year is a translation. . . . 'Under the Yoke,' from the Bulgarian of Ivan Vazoff."

Why, then, did not the *Athenæum* accord it a review in the course of the year, and why did it allow the oversight to be pointed out by the compiler of the summary? One would like to know who is responsible for the translation of "the most remarkable novel" of the year 1893.

I find allusions, too, to two poets whose verses, despite their inclusion in "The Literature of the Year," by the summarist, were unaccountably neglected by the journal in its verse-review columns. The names are quite unfamiliar to me, but perhaps some of the readers of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE may have heard of Mr. Theodore Wratislaw, author of "Caprices," and of Count Stenbock, the writer of "The Shadow of Death"—may even possess copies of those landmarks of literature.

Mr. George Moore's "Modern Paintings" and Mr. Gosse's "Questions at Issue" are described as "equally charming in their various ways," so that one is prepared to find in the 1894 summary Mr. Moore's "Esther Waters" rapturously alluded to with the words, "What an achievement it remains!" and to learn that Mr. Gosse in "In Russet and Silver," has "found a personal note in a dignified expression of the oncoming of middle age."

Mr. Frederick Wedmore is fortunate in having secured kindly notice in the summaries of both years, although in the review columns, in 1893, the tales which appeal so strongly to the summarist are ridiculed both as to matter and form; and men like Mr. George Gissing, Mr. W. E. Norris, Mr. Henry James, and Mr. Marion Crawford, who all published books which were favourably reviewed in the *Athenæum*, receive no mention from the summarist.

We are told, too, in the 1894 summary that "the romance of adventure owes a certain support in our days to Mr. Stanley Weyman." A certain support! This is a curious reference to an author of whom the *Athenæum* wrote in 1893:—"The true romantic gift is distinctly apparent, as well as that singular vividness of touch which distinguished the great masters of the historical novel."

The summarist speaks of Mr. Anthony Hope's "inability to construct a story," yet the *Athenæum*, in its review of "The Prisoner of Zenda," says:—"It is told with all that swish of uninterrupted motion which accounts for nearly all the success of the great story-tellers, like Scott and Dumas."

Miss Jane Barlow's "Kerrigan's Quality," which is described by the *Athenæum* as "one of the most notable achievements in the literature of the year," and "to a reviewer of novels like an oasis to a traveller in the wilderness," finds no place in the summary; nor does Mr. Coulson Kernahan's "Sorrow and Song," although on September 15, 1894, the first place (under the heading "Literature") and four columns of the *Athenæum* are devoted to it!

Is it possible that Mr. Selwyn Image, Mr. Ernest Dowson, Mr. Arthur Moore, the translator of "Under the Yoke," Mr. Theodore Wratislaw, Count Stenbock, Mr. George Moore, Mr. Edmund Gosse, Mr. Frederick Wedmore, and Mr. Herbert P. Horne, whose contribution to the "literature" of 1894 appears to be a work on bookbinding, are friends of the writer of the summary? Miss Harraden, Mr. Weyman, Mr. Hope,

Mr. Kernahan, and Miss Barlow are obviously not : nor, in justice to the gentleman recently much abused by your contributor "Philistine," does Mr. Le Gallienne appear to be, for his "Prose Fancies," although favourably reviewed in the *Athenæum* columns, is unmentioned in the summary of 1894.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

January 31.

ANOTHER PHILISTINE.

“THE NEW CRITICISM.”

A REJOINDER. BY THE PHILISTINE.

Let me begin the few words I have to say in reply to the numerous letters which have followed my articles of a fortnight ago, by exchanging compliments with Mr. Le Gallienne. I am glad he found my attack “genial,” and I will say nothing less about his rejoinder. I am consoled for the supposition that I am leading “an insurrection of the unsuccessful” against “the new dynasty” by the discovery (which I assure Mr. Le Gallienne is entirely his own) that I am a “prose-writer” and an inventor of “prose fancies.” In the old days we just wrote articles, or, worse still, “turned out copy.” Now we write “prose,” “beautiful prose.” I was never so flattered in my life, and though my Philistine soul is puzzled when he speaks of my “theosophic prose” (is this an obscure reference to the Besantine style?), I hope it’s all right.

Now, as to the substance of Mr. Le Gallienne’s letter, I have been largely anticipated by the excellent reply which a correspondent, who signed himself “S.,” has already contributed to your columns. I would gladly substitute any other word than “log-rolling” if I knew one which was more familiar to the public, and which Mr. Le Gallienne considered less offensive. Some of the new “prose-writers,” I am told, invent words when they do not find any handy in the English language. They will oblige us all if they will invent the kind of word I want, a word which does not necessarily imply a dishonest give and take, but which does imply that equally dangerous but unconscious bias which creeps in when friends take to reviewing friends at large. Mr. Le Gallienne has himself obligingly provided me with material for illustrating that point. He tells us that “most of the poets on ‘The Philistine’s’ list” (the list was his, not mine) “are my friends,” but, he adds, “they only became friends after my having reviewed their books.” Now, I

don't wish to scrutinise this too closely, or I might ask—"Which books?" Another correspondent tells me (what I knew perfectly well before) that most of the gentlemen on the list have long been at work, and if Mr. Le Gallienne reviewed one book before he knew his man, he probably reviewed another after he knew him. At all events, he presumably did not make their acquaintance after the article which was the subject of my comment. But this matter is really not worth pursuing. My point is that most of the poets who figure among Mr. Le Gallienne's immortals of the past year are admittedly his friends. This fact materially aids my judgment in the choice between the various alternatives. I ask myself, Is it more likely (1) that there should in a few months of 1894 be this sudden outburst of genius "such as few decades in the history of our country have surpassed," (2) that most of the poets contributing to it should be Mr. Le Gallienne's own friends, or (3) that Mr. Le Gallienne has been led by the bias of which I spoke into exaggerating the merits of his own friends?

Mr. Le Gallienne also helps me further. These gentlemen, he says, became his friends after he had reviewed them, and only two have reviewed him in return. But another friend on the next page of the paper from which I quoted compared Mr. Le Gallienne to Charles Lamb, and declared in really thrasonical language that his "Prose Fancies" was "quite the most remarkable piece of prose produced by any of our younger contemporaries. I say nothing about this judgment, which, let us hope, is true. But are not these three gentlemen a sufficient illustration of my meaning? And is Mr. Le Gallienne himself so superior to human nature that he really thinks he could at some future date sit down and write an unbiassed review of a friend's book, if that friend happened to have compared him to Charles Lamb, or have pronounced him the greatest prose-writer of modern times? All these gentlemen would, I admit, be basely ungrateful if they were not Mr. Le Gallienne's friends, but in such an atmosphere of mutual appreciation, criticism is surely about the last plant one would expect to see developed.

And that brings me to the next point, which is that Mr. Le Gallienne

seems to suppose that there is no third course between "over-praising a contemporary" and "meanly belittling" him. It is, I agree, better to do the first than the second, but as "S." put it, it is better still to do neither. At all events, neither of the first two courses has the least claim to be criticism. Judgment, balance, sanity, contribute to "appreciation," just as much as jealousy or malevolence may contribute to depreciation, and the poet who is worth his salt will prefer discriminating praise to the tallest comparison with Milton or Shakespeare. As to that comparison, I must hold Mr. Le Gallienne to his words. He did, indeed, say that Mr. Eglinton "reminded" him of Milton—a judgment whereat a Philistine with the samples before him marvelled greatly; but he said that Mr. Thompson "carried imagery to the topmost heaven of invention, such as no English poet, save Shakespeare, has ever ventured," and that Mr. Gale "had an advantage" over the Caroline poets. If I wished to press the matter I might infer from the first sentence that Mr. Thompson also had an advantage over Shakespeare. At all events, the words seem to justify my humble protest against dragging in Shakespeare. Again, I did not conclude that Mr. Le Gallienne considered these gentlemen to be major poets from his protest against the use of the invidious word "minor." With that protest I deeply sympathise, but my inference was drawn from Mr. Le Gallienne's positive statement, that "there is in their work a body of achievement which few decades in the literature of our country have surpassed"—which is nonsense if they are not major poets. And as if to leave no mistake, he added, that 'Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, Matthew Arnold, were all minor poets once,' and that "every new man is looked upon as a minor poet until he forces the world to admit him as a major." I hope Mr. Le Gallienne will not imperil any friendships by explaining these plain words away.

Mr. Le Gallienne, it seems, is so devoted to that dilemma of his about over-praising or meanly belittling, that he will have it that because I object to these panegyrics I am necessarily a kind of new Jeffrey or Christopher North—one of those "literary homicides whose howls of torment will," in some future state, "be the only clarions of their fame." It really doesn't follow at all. As a matter of fact

(though it is of no consequence to anybody except myself), I have prided myself, among Philistines, upon a rather early and intelligent appreciation of some of Mr. Le Gallienne's immortals. About others, indeed, I hold what I consider to be the true faith, but what that is I am not going to spoil the scent by expounding at present. Another correspondent, who signs himself "A Reader of Modern Poetry," applies to me a severely literal method of interpretation such as one Philistine, as a rule, only expects from another Philistine. Because I spoke of the great seven as "discoveries" of the year, therefore I could not have known that any of them ever wrote before. Because I spoke of one of them as being manifested in "one week," I could never have heard of him until that moment. On strict literal and logical principles I suppose that does follow; but (how shall I explain?) it was intended to be a figure of speech—imagery, as the minor poets say—irony, too, as I flattered myself.

The next argument urged by many correspondents in different forms is that the poets must live. I am far from questioning the necessity, but there are certain elementary, if disagreeable, facts which cannot be got rid of, and one of these is that not more than one or two poets in any generation have ever earned a living by poetry. If, then, the matter must be treated from this bread-and-butter or eleemosynary point of view, I should say that the critic who encouraged the would-be poet to suppose that verse will give him a livelihood was doing an exceedingly injudicious thing. As a Philistine, I am entitled to object to that kind of reviewing on what may be called charity organisation principles. The aim is so hopeless in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, that it is not worth pursuing. Reviewing on these principles is no doubt perfectly legitimate, provided the reviewer is frank about it, and tells his public that he compares this new poet to Shakespeare, and that new poet to Milton, not because he really thinks him the peers of these illustrious people, but because he must live, and because his wares are so difficult to dispose of unless they are well advertised. But that is not criticism: it is the business of a broker, honest no doubt under proper conditions; but still, broker's business and not critic's business. The

critic's business is to judge the book by the best standard he can apply. If his judgment should aid in selling a book which he considers good, he is or ought to be a happier man ; but if before beginning his task he tells himself that he must help this man to live, or that man to sell his books, he abandons criticism and takes to advertisement. This, however, does not need serious argument : it is both a truism and a counsel of perfection. Every reviewer admits that this is the correct attitude ; every reviewer in dealing with a friend's book knows that it is a most difficult degree of virtue. Some reviewers may be (as one correspondent suggests) compound with their conscience for flattering their friends by damning others with whom they are not acquainted. In the critical Utopia no friend will ever review a friend's book.

Another correspondent carries the matter a step further, and declares that the poet "cannot relax the stern countenance of the unenlightened publisher" unless the critic helps him in the effort. Therefore, "unless the 'Master' have sufficient private funds to bring out his work, the world will never see it." The "Master" also, I might add, will, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, be saved from wasting his money. But really, this gentleman seems to suggest that the critic ought not only to review the book when published, but also accompany it with a private note when it goes in manuscript to the publisher. That, I dare say, will be the end of it if the writer is encouraged to consider the critic as an honest broker between himself and the public and himself and his publisher. But in that case the critic will be as much entitled to ask his commission on the transaction as any other "literary agent."

Finally, it does not follow that because a few great poets have been belittled, therefore all belittled poets will be great. That is the favourite paralogism of the log-roller, and the favourite consolation of the "belittled" little men. A student of literary history could find scores of cases in which contemporary criticism was just, to set against a few cases in which it was conspicuously wrong. It is the privilege of the big men to be revenged on their critics, and though puffing has made moderate performers look foolish, I doubt if any great performer was ever killed by a literary homicide. Not having

Mr. Waugh's gift of prophecy, I cannot say what may happen when I "lie howling" (as Mr. Le Gallienne puts it), but I don't think that any new poet will have any worse grudge against me than that I once gave him a rather conspicuous advertisement.

On the whole, then, I am unrepentant, but if Mr. Grant Allen thought my reference to him offensive, he certainly should have an apology. It was intended to be genial, and though Mr. Le Gallienne suggests otherwise, I cannot see, on looking back to it, that it is open to any other interpretation.

THE PHILISTINE.

THE MINOR POETS' WALPURGIS.

(FROM "THE LOG-ROLLIAD"; AN UNPUBLISHED MINOR POEM.)

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—Observing in your highly-valued broadsheet (of which I would venture to say, if Latin tags were not out of favour, "*senex, sed, mehercule! viridis animo ac vicens*"), much warm and circumstrident controversy between the Critics and the Minor Poets, who are in debate amongst themselves as to the true essentials of Criticism and Minor Poetry, I am encouraged to bring a grievance of my own before your impartial judgment-seat.

I am, Sir, a Criticaster, hampered with a conviction that I could write Minor Poetry if I were to try, but hitherto deterred from commencing author by the agonising discovery, made somewhere between my teens and my thirties, that all Minor Poetry has been written and printed many times over, and that a new adventurer in that line can but reproduce, as it were, the metrical Cud of a long succession of Ruminants. Finding myself, nevertheless, without occupation in my trade of Book Butcher in Ordinary to the British Public, thanks to the usual remissness of Book Farmers in sending their cattle to the shambles during the month of January, I sat down a few days ago to the pleasant diversion of composing a Minor Poem, to which I designed the unpretentious title of *The Log-Rolliad*. Scarcely had I covered my twentieth folio with the idle conceits of a too-transitory moment, when I was distracted by this pother of the Minor Poets, whose circumciseive wrath against the "Philistine" has bestrewn your columns with literary gore.

Now, Sir, my grievance is simply this: If I were to suffer *The Log-Rolliad*, or any disconnected folio thereof, to see the light of day before the pother aforesaid is forgotten, it would inevitably be cast in my teeth that I had some personal, pertinent, and partial intent in such a publication, whether as a Criticaster turning to rend the Poets, or as an Un-rolled Minor Poet eager to scarify the Critics

who have not Rolled him. But if, on the other hand, I shrink from submitting a sample of this Minor Poem to the patrons for whom I have heretofore purveyed a different sort of viand, then am I unreasonably debarred from that Liberty of the Press which, as I am told on high authority, was secured for me by the ingenious Mr. Milton.

It is under these circumstances that I appeal, Sir, to your judgment and decision. Shall I print, or shall I burn? Keep silence even from good verses, or suffer my brother Criticasters to make a mock of me?

The Log-Rolliad begins with a midnight scene in Parliament-square. The full moon sheds its light on Westminster Abbey, and the two Houses stand out in relief against the dark background. An Impressionist, clad in long ulster and slouched hat, completes a picture of the buildings, from the Clock Tower to the west front of the Abbey. I omit his soliloquy—though it has a spirit, Sir, and pith!—and pass on to my second character. A mild-faced and genial man, with fur-lined coat and short curling wig, grasping a flute in his left hand, appears to the Impressionist to float down from the Victoria Tower, and alight in the roadway in front of St. Margaret's. There is no mistaking the Bard of Lismore, who approaches the other, and thus suavely addresses him:—

Down from Olympus, gentle sir,
I come as Jove's commissioner.
(Excuse my classical disguise,
And for "Olympus" read "the skies."
At Jove your modern taste may scoff:
I know mythology is off,
And, whilst I sojourn on your shore,
Of all things most I dread to bore.)
My mission here is briefly this:
To visit your metropolis;
With watchful eye and open mind
To note the ways of human kind,

Mark what the cockney counts as fame,
And, back returning whence I came,
Ere morning sets the east aglow,
Report on all I've heard below.

IMPRESSIONIST.

Good sir, proceed—the matter's new!—
You come from heav'n to interview?
I own I'm taken by surprise
To hear of papers in the skies;
'Twill add to death another scare
If journalists are rampant there!

Goldie explains himself: he is no journalist, but has been sent by his brother bards, sitting in council amidst the asphodel, to see what is

doing in the London that they cannot forget, even in the abodes of the blest. I omit much ; for, like Goldie, I dread to bore. There is a wild sort of Walpurgis Night, in which politicians and socialists, doctors and dances, authors and publishers, successively bear their part. Then it is the turn of the Minor Poets :—

A GREYBEARD.

What means this new poetic rage ?
My youthful rhymes were crown'd with
Now every paper fills a page [curses ;
With minor poets' verses.

THE EDITORS.

The reason's plain ; each budding bard
Aspires to deck his brows with laurel ;
We get free copy by the yard,
And much enjoy the quarrel.

So Morris, Arnold, Austfn, vie
With Watson, Dobson, Thompson,
Bridges,
In frenzy fine, with rolling eye,
To climb the topmost ridges.

So Gale and Henley and Mackay,
Buchanan, Patmore, Watts, Rossetti,
Edmund and Oscar tune their lay,
And shape their *amoretti*.

GOLDIE.

What host is this that fills the ample space
From Poets' Corner down to Whitehall Place ?
Did ever bards in such profusion throng
Since first the morning stars conspired in song ?
Two-score had summ'd us when the earth I trod,
From sober Johnson to mercurial Dodd ;
But here be full five thousand in a string—
Five thousand warblers warranted to sing !
My friends, I travel from a distant land,
Where English verses are in much demand—
Excuse my curiosity to know
What each contributes to the passing show.

THE MINOR POETS.

1. I hymn the glories of the commonplace.
2. I shine with splendours rapt from Vishnu's face.
3. My Tory soul with rebel ardour glows.
4. I pore upon the petals of a rose.
5. I chant my lady's fan, her locks of sheen.
6. I sing of gambols on the village green.
7. I draw sweet music from the sordid slum.
8. I hear the bees on Attic pasture hum.

9. I sing of human nature's daily food.
 10. I most aspire to be least understood.
 11. I sing the actual and the up-to-date.
 12. I preach the fusion of the disparate.
 13. For me truth centres in an epigram ;
With paradox my poetry I cram.
 14. I'm decadent : for decadents I sing
The soul of beauty in an evil thing.
 15. And I for Weltschmerz have a perfect *flair*—
My models are Verlaine and Baudelaire.
 16. I chase th' elusive Zeitgeist evermore,
Who, like old Proteus on the Pharian shore,
Assumes a thousand forms within my grip,
And, almost captured, gives me still the slip.
 17. Well-nigh they slew me with a zealous boom,
But something yet within my heart made room ;
A chord is struck in simple souls, I ween,
And Tomlinson shall keep my memory green.
- * * * * *
- 5,000. I am the last discovered of the lot—
And now for newer bards the scent is hot.
I shall not stay above a puffing-while,
Yet for one month I bask in fortune's smile.
If my brief boom disperse a hundred copies,
I'll not complain, though Fleet-street feed on poppies.

—I am, Sir, your obedient humble servant,

CRITICASTER.

MORE LEAVES FROM THE LOG-ROLLIAD.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—Had I not been close engaged with mattock and knife, when I perceived that you decided not to burn but print certain fragments of the unpublished *Log-Rolliad* (for the Book Farmers do now send oft into the shambles, and the poor journeyman Flesher hath but slight intermission of his toil) I had lost no time in submitting a companion piece to "The Minor Poets' Walpurgis."

Here, Sir, is a string of jingling quatrains, which glance with good humour at some familiar sorts of contemporary Minor Prose, and at the

methods whereby it looks to scale the crests of England's Helicon ; preceded by some of the lines wherein our Olympian visitant in Parliament-square describes the manner of his despatching to London :—

GOLDIE.

The empyrean is my home,
Where bards in happy concert roam,
Who once below drew fleeting breath,
And sang of love, and war, and death.
I am the humblest of them all,
Whom Goldie still th' immortals call—
Admitted by my comrades' grace
To sit with Chaucer face to face,
Or couch'd on asphodel to bide
At Shakespeare's feet, by Milton's side ;
To see young Shelley's rapture grow,
And Keats, entranced in mythic flow ;
Hear Homer beat his measur'd line,
Or Dante muse on things divine ;

Some of the Immortals doubted whether London retained any clear memory or real appreciation of the writers who had diverted her in the past, or whether she was not satisfied with her new Voices in place of the old. At last the Souls resolved to send a commissioner.

GOLDIE.

The lots were drawn, and Fate's decree
Imposed that arduous task on me.
So once again this earth I tread,
In mundane shape, with mortal dread
Lest duns, or Kenrick, haunt the shore,
To plague me as they plagued before.

IMPRESSIONIST.

Fear not, sweet bard, thy country's friend !
Sure none, to earth's remotest end,
Would vex, or would not have thee crown'd
With bays, and thrice three hundred pound.

GOLDIE.

Almost a pulse of ichor stirs,
As thus you laud my simple verse !
But who are these that round us stand,
Each with a trumpet in his hand ?

To glow with Goethe, and remit
The loftier phase for jest or wit.

An hour ago, in idle mood,
We talk'd of human brotherhood,
Recall'd our sojourn here on earth,
Its meed of sorrow and of mirth,
Rehears'd our triumphs, and were 'ain
To wear the laurel-wreath again.
As thus we whiled the hour away,
A rival band in mimic fray,
The wordy contest warmer grew,
Each thrust its lightning parry drew,
Thought answer'd thought in swift
exchange,
And fancy touch'd her widest range.

IMPRESSIONIST.

Great Writers all—their fame's confess'd ;
Behold the labels on their breast.
" New Shakespeare," one ; and, by his side,
" A Modern Milton "—certified !
" A Second Lamb " frisks past amain ;
" A Thackeray come to life again " ;
" Scott Redivivus " next I view ;
" Neo-Elizabethan " too !

GOLDIE.

What ! all the Souls in heav'n that dwell
Have earthly counterparts as well ?
They print the labels plain—'tis wise !
Or they were hard to recognise.

THE NOVELISTS.

New Notes we utter, week by week
 Fresh horror from our pens distilling ;
 And if the sense be yet to seek,
 We net the nimble shilling.
 With Minor Chords our music teems,
 The crass and crude with zeal we're
 blending ;
 And still for palpitating themes
 Our search is never-ending.
 Now jaundice is our only wear ;
 Not gold but gilt our readers relish ;
 In Yellow Key our fancies rare
 We cunningly embellish.

THE ESSAYISTS.

We paint in words that grandly ring ;
 Burke, Lamb, De Quincey pale before
 us ;
 Full-arm'd from Bodley's head we spring
 To swell Apollo's chorus.

SPRETA.

A wail into the night I send ;
 The critics vengefully pursue me ;
 At Court I made a potent friend,
 Yet puffing did undo me.

SPRETUS.

Long since the groundlings' ear I caught,
 My books are sold, my friends are
 zealous ;
 The critics count it all as naught,
 Which proves they must be jealous.

LOG-ROLLER.

One art ye lack, your art to hide.
 If you must puff, my worthy brother—
 If, madam, you're dissatisfied—
 Try puffing one another.

—I am, Sir, your obedient lumble servant,

When hapless author fails to charm,
 Or finds his critics less than civil,
 What can their peevish souls disarm,
 Or send them to the devil ?

The only art to check their spite,
 To turn aside the threat'ning doom,
 And make those critics more polite,
 Is just to raise a boom.

THE CRITICS.

'Tis true !—the critic's on the shelf ;
 Gone is Othello's occupation ;
 The world of letters rules itself
 By mutual admiration.

Tempt us no more with volumes new
 Opinions of the Press to utter ;
 We can but write a straight review—
 Your chums can spread the butter.

THE PUBLISHERS.

We run the Muses ; prose and verse
 Year after year to birth we're bringing ;
 Without us empty were your purse,
 And vain were all your singing.

Our presses teem with dainties rare,
 Art-bound, in fancy cloth and leather ;
 If they succeed, 'tis our affair—
 We put the books together.

More authorship's a sorry trade ;
 Most men can write, with ink on paper,
 But how to sell the thing when made—
 That's quite another caper !

Then gaily still the business jogs ;
 Your British public needs cajoling—
 We've nobbled Fame : bring us the logs,
 And we'll provide the rolling.

CRITICASTER.

THE BALLADE OF THE NEWEST POETS.

Lo! now hath come of Charity the day
 When each man is to each right brotherly;
 And each upon his brother's brow the Bay
 Doth daily place, and call on all to see.
 For Poet-princes, Poet-prophets We,
 With each his throne, and each his little shrine,
 (But oh, my Brother, none is like to thee!)
 (Sotto voce) *Roll thou my log, and I will roll thee thine!*

If ye have aught to say or naught to say,
 Clothe it in unknown words of mystery,
 For Form is All, and thought shall rot away,
 But occult words outlast Eternity.
 Lo! who hath wrought such wild weird words as Ye,
 Words as wan stars for splendour, strong as wine,
 (And thine, my Brother, over all must be)
Roll thou my log, and I will roll thee thine.

If now I voice my verse and lute my lay,
 And if thou seest aught of good in me,
 Tell it, nor look for gratitude or pay,
 But raise thy voice and bend the reverent knee
 And mark me "Newest." Note the Major Key,
 The Tenderness, the Insight, These are Mine.
 (But Thou art paramount by this Decree)
Roll thou my log, and I will roll thee thine.

L'ENVOI

O Brothers all, be courteous, and agree
 And take ye this for motto, this for sign,
 A silver trumpet, whence these words fly free,
Roll thou my log, and I will roll thee thine.

RICARDO STEPHENS.

THE "NEW" REVIEWER.

Although I am a minor bard,
I am a critic, stern and hard,
A knowledge that's consoling,
Because the way I always praise
My fellow-bards in polished phrase
The vulgar call log-rolling.

When Prigson's "Tears" came out, I swore
We'd had no bard like him before,
The rarest and divinest ;
And Prigson wrote about my book
That "its worst passage he mistook
For Milton at his finest."

But, woe is me ! the public taste
Is now so false and so debased,
So Philistine and rotten,
That notice is not twelve months old,
Yet not a book of mine is sold,
And Prigson is forgotten.

I raved of Simkins as sublime,
I vowed that Goggs was for all time
And blessed the land that bred them ;
But though their own good taste is such
That they have praised me quite as much,
Yet nobody has read them.

Yet on the sacred scroll of Fame
Each one of us beholds his name
By mutual arrangement ;
Though off that scroll, the cynics swear,
Each name would go if once there were
Between us an estrangement.

The public still, to our amaze,
Appears to think new critics' ways
Need carefully eschewing ;
It may stand plays and novels "new"
And tolerate "New" Woman too,
But damns the "new" reviewing.

L.

“Is it Bodley
“Doth thus oddly?”
Said the people of the town.

II.

"Here's a poet—
"Don't you know it?"
Asked the critic with a soul.

III.

"Like a *lane* that hath no turning," said the Philistine
instead,
"Is your string of wondrous poets marching just
where they are led!"
"If I've caught them,
"Ye have bought them,"
Smiled a mediæval Head.

NPNE

Mr. Punch reports a meeting of the Amalgamated British Society for the Supply of Laureates. There was, it seems, "a numerous attendance of authors and reviewers with a sprinkling of publishers." The chairman explained that "it was becoming more and more costly and difficult to feed the public on geniuses, and he was inclined to advise the discontinuance of this branch of the society's operations. At this point some commotion was caused by Mr. Le Gallienne and Mr. Arthur Waugh, who rose simultaneously to protest against the chairman's remarks. Mr. Le Gallienne was so far carried away by his agitation as to hurl a pamphlet at Mr. Grant Allen's head. In the uproar which ensued, Mr. Le Gallienne could be heard ejaculating 'beautiful phrases,' 'richly-coloured musical

sentences,' 'ideal and transcendental,' 'nothing finer since Lamb,' 'all for eighteenpence, and 'a genius who sleeps below the wood-pigeons.' The pamphlet thus discharged proved to be by a Mr. John Eglington. . . . Eventually Mr. Le Gallienne (who had returned, disguised in proof-sheets) proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. John Davidson, who proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Grant Allen, who proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Francis Thompson, who proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Arthur Waugh, who proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. John Lane, who proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Le Gallienne. All these having been unanimously passed, the meeting broke up."

"THE CASE OF THE REBELLIOUS BARDLET."

Truth contributes to the discussion some verses under the above heading. The following are two of the stanzas :—

Come, Mr. R. Le Gallienne,
You're angry and you show it ;
For this is nonsense which you pen
About the Minor Poet.
"Because," say you, "he is a bard,
And fame may p'raps await him,
Therefore it is extremely hard
The critics dare to 'slate' him !"

But you in this, my dear young man,
Due limits are exceeding ;
You will not find sane men inclined
Your protest to be heeding.
Bardlets whose impudence is vast,
So sure as they're detected,
Will be henceforth, as in the past,
Unsparingly corrected !

The *Freeman's Journal* says :—

A good deal of gratification is experienced by those who are genuinely interested in current literature at the fact that *THE WESTMINSTER* has had the courage to expose systematised log-rolling, which has of late done duty for literary criticism in several well-known London publications. The sudden and unjustifiable booming of the minor poet, of whom nobody has heard outside his own clique, and of whom nobody cares to hear on his poetic merits, is the most irritating feature of what *THE WESTMINSTER* calls "the new log-rolling." These minor poets seem to be extensively employed in reviewing each other's effusions, and the track of the log is shown in the plainest possible way in the article already mentioned. They "discover" each other periodically, but that branch of the business has been rather overdone recently. Another favourite method of securing the *réclame* is to get an innocent-looking paragraph about the extraordinarily high figures paid for "first editions" of volumes of verse by these gifted individuals, when in most cases the first edition has also been the last, except where the log has rolled with especial energy and success. From being merely a nuisance and a weariness to the flesh this log-rolling has begun to assume the dimensions of a scandal, and it is sincerely to be hoped that *THE WESTMINSTER* exposure will, at any rate, check it in some of its more audacious aspects.

PART III.

THE NEW FICTION.

A PROTEST AGAINST SEX-MANIA.

With Replies and Comments from the Authors and others.

I.—INTRODUCTORY.

I read the other day a very interesting novel by Mr Henry Murray, entitled "A Man of Genius." The "man of genius" is a young Bohemian who lives with a chorus-girl from the Frivolity stage, and upon both her and himself he imposes a constant martyrdom of sordid privation. Not that he declines to work or is without the means of earning a livelihood. He is simply a "martyr to art"; his conscience prevents him from writing any but nasty stories which no publisher will consent to print. Every one of his novels contains at least one impossible passage which his "principles" forbid him to strike out, and which decency forbids the publisher to print. So the "man of genius" and his chorus girl come near to starving, though it is to be remarked that no principle hinders him from living on her slender earnings, so long as these hold out. That also is in the cause of "art." He is unemployed, not because, like some trade-unionists, he declines to take less than a standard wage, but because he refuses to do any but dirty work.

The Need for Critical Plain Speaking.

Now this story is a very clever piece of satire, and I commend the subsequent experiences of this "man of genius" to anyone who has not made his acquaintance. But there is one point about it which somewhat strains my credulity. I am unable to conceive what kind of writing it was that this gentleman failed to get published. He must have been singularly unfortunate, or his particular variety of nastiness singularly out of the common, if he failed to launch it on to the public through one or other of the recognised alternatives. For since the days when Mr. Vizetelly was prosecuted at Bow-street for translating Zola, the fear of the police-court has ceased to be operative, and if some publishers have old-fashioned fears or qualms, there are numerous others who are more liberal. Personally

I have no desire to see the police-court method brought back, but in its absence we Philistines must assert ourselves. One of the chief defects of criticism just now, as I have tried to show on another occasion, is a morbid fear of being out of date. It takes up with the new art which it does not understand, or with the decadent in literature which it positively dislikes, for fear some emancipated lad should pronounce it to be anile or moral. If we who positively rejoice in these epithets do not speak up for ourselves, no one will.

From the Yellow-back to the Yellow-book.

In this country, the decadent movement had touched painting and poetry long before it laid a finger upon fiction. In our childhood certain lady novelists were talked of with bated breath as improper reading for the well-brought-up, and there were households, not otherwise illiberal, in which the yellow-back novel (the invention, I believe, of Mr. W. H. Smith) was supposed to be the vehicle of mysterious contaminations. Good, respectable lady novelists, whose only daring, as a rule, was an elopement which looked compromising for a few chapters, but was invariably found at the end of Vol. III. to have been consecrated by Holy Matrimony! From the yellow-back, too, we have travelled to the yellow-book, leaving the former in a kind of stranded respectability, for the consolation of those households which the emancipated youth calls "suburban." Only see, says this young man, how we have progressed, how modern we are! "On our sleeves we wear our sexes, our diseases unashamed." There I stick. It is quite true, and it is rather nasty; but why "progress"?

Progress or Decadence?

In what respect, unless in pruriency, morbidity, degeneracy, are we "advanced," when we become proud of our diseases, unreserved about our animalities, and boastful about our appetites? I know the answer: It's there, it's life, let us be "brave" (that is always the word) "and recognise it." Why not say at once, Let's sit upon the ground, and talk of drains and sinks and rubbish-heaps? They are there; they, I suppose, are life, and they are certainly of great importance to all of us. Possibly, a "martyr to art" will in the next century think it necessary to demonstrate through fiction that all modern life,

rightly understood, depends upon drain-pipes. No doubt it will be hailed as scientific, psychological, and profoundly true, also very "brave." But my reply is that big writers, who have what Stevenson called the antiseptic style, can and have treated what our new writers call "life" without the slightest offence. They have handled it boldly, but they do not peck and probe and anatomise; they tell us what they mean, and don't mean more than they dare to say. They know too much about life to suppose that men and women as a rule sit always pondering over the problem of sex. There are even coarse writers who have this antiseptic quality. Tom Jones is a venial, healthy being beside the young decadent who talks "sex" with a woman in the modern drawing-room novel.

The Defiant Man and the Revolting Woman.

The vogue of this particular variety is a thing of the past two years. Some trace the beginning to "The Yellow Aster" and "The Heavenly Twins." I wish to speak with respect of the writers of both those books, and for my own part I think they have suffered from the subsequent performances of others who have become associated with them as in a sort of school. At all events there was in the second of these books a touch of conviction, even of fanaticism, which proved it to have been written from good motives, and neither dwelt exclusively upon the parts which might have been called morbid. They were long books, and they embraced a good deal of life. But still between them they began what is called the revolt of the woman, and their phenomenal success seems to determine others to go and do likewise—only more so and more so until the public also should revolt. Then, on the other side, we have had the assertion of the man—the man determined to flaunt his amours, his superiority to *bourgeois* morality, his defiance of Sarah Grand as well as of Mrs. Grundy. So we have had a regular man and woman literature, in which both, as Mr. Davidson says, have worn their sexes on their sleeves, and both have exploited their emotions, and explored their physical natures as if there were nothing else in the world for men and women to do or think about. A quarterly review has been invented for the furtherance of this literature, and several series give it hospitality. On

the man's side it is cynical as well as nasty; it assumes that there is no world except Piccadilly after dark, or perhaps the coulisses of some disreputable music-hall. It gathers scraps from the more notorious French performers in this line, and it mocks at what is supposed to be the British conscience. On the woman's side it seems at least to be in deadly earnest, but many of the assumptions are the same, *mutatis mutandis*, and the expression of them is even less veiled. The woman does not haunt Piccadilly, but she lives in the consuming fires of passion; she must talk of it, must yield to it, though she leaves husband and child, and if these are obstacles in her path the whole universe is assailed with her cries.

These are the two chief classes, but there are other subsidiary classes. There is the class in which the defiant man and the revolting woman meet, with results that are indescribably turbid. There is another class—bordering, it seems to me, on insanity—of whirling and delirious books, which rave of fauns and satyrs, incarnate devils, and hideous scarlet and “magenta” sins. In these you seem to be frothing and bubbling on the surface of unutterable corruption, odours of the dead in your nostrils, mephitic vapours about you, and the sun turned to blood above you. These, it may be said, are comparatively harmless, but a variety of this class is the book which at first sight seems unmeaning, and at second is seen to have a meaning which is unmentionable.

Having thus mapped out the ground, I propose in the chapters that follow to take the various kinds of “new novels” in turn, and subject them to critical analysis.

II.—THE “REVOLTING WOMAN” NOVEL.

The last two years would supply a good many specimens of the various classes of decadent fiction into which (as we saw in my last chapter) the sex-maniacal novels of to-day may be divided; but for present purposes I prefer to confine myself to the last few weeks, when all kinds appear to have come with a rush. I have about eight books before me which have been produced either at the close of last year or at the beginning of this, and every day seems to bring another hot from the press which makes a bid to surpass its predecessors in its emancipation, its decadence, and its “bravery.”

A Piece Composed of “Discords.”

Of the “Revolting Woman” class I cannot do better than take a recent leading example, the book called “Discords,” contributed by George Egerton to the Keynotes Series, of which she is the inventor and patentee. The title is, in itself, not a little interesting. Every musician knows the value of occasional discords in their place and modulated by succeeding harmonies. But a piece composed wholly of discords has never, that I know of, been contemplated by the wildest devotee of the new music. It would be intolerable unless the human ear were profoundly modified. Within limits the analogy seems to me to apply to fiction. Life is not all discords, or the human race would perish, and the fiction which treats it as discords and nothing else is as untrue to life and as inartistic as the fiction which ignores discords is undoubtedly vapid. George Egerton’s book is not misnamed, as a brief glance at it will show. Let us take the first story, which may be summarised in strict fairness as follows :—

Discord No. I.

A woman having compromised herself with one man (or done something else disgraceful), the written proofs of this compromising relation have come into the possession of another man who is a fierce sensualist of the most brutal type, also a married man. In order to escape exposure, she yields to the threats and importunities of this blackmailing scoundrel, and goes off with him to Paris, and lives

with him as his mistress. After a time he deserts her and patches up with his wife. Then there comes on the scene another woman who has been married against her will ("a Cardinal and seven priests assisting at the sacrifice") to a rich man whom she hates, and separated from a poor man whom she loves. Mistaking the situation, she comes to congratulate the woman who was bold enough to defy the world and decamp with a married lover, and is apparently bracing herself up to taking the same step. The woman "who did" does not enlighten her as to the true state of the case ("It concerns no one to know"), but she enlarges at great length upon the duty of women to be brave, and to bear the consequences of their own acts. "It used to be a fancy of mine," she says, "that if I were unfortunate enough to bring an illegitimate child into the world I would never disown it or put it away. . . . If I had such a child"—with a lightening of eyes—"I would call it mine before the whole world, and tack no Mrs. to my name either." So the two women mingle their tears, and the story ends.

Now, what could be the object of writing this? It is not art, it is impossibly remote from life, and, though written with the strenuousness of a tract, the moral is absurd. The woman who "has always thought that each man or woman should bear, as far as possible, the entire effect of his mistakes or sins," and who talks pages about being brave and bearing the consequences, has just done something disgraceful, and then, to escape the consequences, yielded to the most hideous form of blackmail. A repulsive and unnatural story ends, therefore, in cant.* As for this woman, though apparently a lady

* Mr. John Lane (see *infra*, p. 122) suggests that "there is not a word to convey this meaning; indeed, it is rather obvious that the woman acts as a voluntary scapegoat." If the author declares that to be her meaning, I will, of course, accept her assurance. But there is also not a word to convey it, and the natural inference seemed to me to be one of the two alternatives I have set down. If a scapegoat, for whom is she a scapegoat? Her parents and sisters are mentioned, but she regards them with a respect and affection which would be hardly possible if the disgraceful act had been theirs. Are they happy? she asks herself when she has gone away with the man. "No, no longer. They are surely miserable. That *she* has done" (p. 36)—which surely would be rather unintelligible, if one of them had done the thing for which she was suffering.

by birth and education, she was already on such terms with the married scoundrel who took advantage of her, that before he had threatened, or she had yielded to his threat, he was in a position to make an appointment with her alone, to call her an "obstinate little devil," and generally to treat her as a woman of the street. She is a woman, we have learnt—and it explains much—who had fancies about what she should do "if she were unfortunate enough to bring an illegitimate child into the world."

Sex-Mania Rampant.

There are critics, I believe, who consider the psychology of this story to be profound, its significance immense, and its "bravery" heroic. For myself, I see neither art, life, nor meaning in it—nothing, in fact, except what I have called sex-mania. Here, for instance, is a description of a convent school going out for a walk in charge of a Sister of Mercy:—

They are laughing and talking gaily, for the sisters are favourites, and number many "flames" amongst the crowd of girls filled with sickly sentiment, "*schwärmerei*," and awakening sexual instinct. They are genuinely in love. If their favourite leans over their shoulder to correct a theme, and happens to touch their arm, it calls forth a blushing disturbance in even the most stolid of the pupils. They colour quickly if she speaks to them suddenly, and touch furtively her scapular or the great cross at the end of her beads.

Here we have a simple and innocent scene, distorted by the pervading sex medium. It is just a detail, not required by any context or part of any story; but with the writers who regard life thus even the simplest relations between human beings are liable to the imputation of sex.

More "Discords."

That is Discord No. I. Discord No. II. tells of a lady who fell madly in love at sight with a foreign wood-carver. She was the clergyman's niece, and he a workman engaged in restoring the church. She sees him two or three times, without speaking to him; he comes and sings under her window one night, and then departs. Her life is blasted, and years later she has a "sort of Indian summer of the senses," and tells the story to a chance acquaintance in a flood of passionate words. Discord Nos. III. and IV. are both

very ugly, but neither are grotesque or unnatural. The first tells the story of a woman betrayed by one man, then in his absence by another, then by others, and so on to drink and ruin. A thoroughly vicious character, if there is a standard; one "who just gets insane and lets herself get carried away." "He didn't admire me. . . . not a bit. . . . I tried to attract him, there was a kind of excitement in it . . . and . . . well, we let ourselves drift." No doubt true and not uncommon, but as it stands, a gruesome subject for fiction. No. IV. is a harrowing story of death, drink, and suicide, but, to do it justice, strong, and in parts pathetic. No. V. takes us again to the revolting daughter:—

A Very Unpleasant Sermon.

A young and absolutely innocent girl is just married to a "florid, bright-eyed, loose-lipped man of the world," and it is the moment of their "going away." The girl is in tears upstairs with her mother, who is "flushing painfully, making a strenuous effort to say something to the girl—something that is opposed to the whole instincts of her life." We see them next at the station. "The train runs in; a first-class carriage marked 'engaged' is attached, and he comes for her; his hot breath smells of champagne, and it strikes her that his eyes are fearfully big and bright," &c., &c. Then after five years she returns. Her husband has just gone to Paris with a girl from the Alhambra. "These little trips," she announces, "have been my one solace. I assure you, I have always hailed them as lovely oases in the desert of matrimony, resting-places on the journey. My sole regret was their infrequency." Then she launches out and overwhelms her mother with a torrent of denunciation for letting her marry this man. There are seven pages of this, and it spares no part of a sensual man's relations with his wife.

Now this, I am prepared to be told, was written under a stern sense of duty. There are cases like this in the world, and it is essential that mothers should be reminded what they are doing when they barter their daughters to a man of this description. That is the argument, and though I cannot harmonise it with any view of fiction as an art, I desire to give it full weight. But taking it as a sermon, if that is the right view, will anyone say that it is any

degree more forcible for the offences against good taste which are to be found on every other page, or that the most powerful effect could not have been produced without the nasty details of the man's appearance, the still nastier details of his departure with his bride, and the many similar touches in the girl's rhetoric? If the story is intended to appeal to the mothers, I venture to think that this is not the right way of going about it; and even if that is the intention, has George Egerton considered the large possibility that it will not reach them at all, but fall into the hands of others to whom these things appeal far otherwise than as sermons?

The Final "Discord."

We pass now to the sixth and last "Discord," in some ways the best written, which gathers up the whole "keynote" conception of life, and ends by applying a keynote remedy. Here we are introduced to a young Norwegian widow, "a seductively-attractive thing of piquant contrasts—the attractive artificiality, physical lassitude, and irritable weariness of a disillusioned woman of the world, and the eyes of a spoilt child filled with frank petulant query." She is lying on her sofa "feeling as if she wanted to scream." Clearly a hysterical lady, in a bad state of nerves. At her husband's death she was "sorry in a way, and dreaded the loneliness," but "the strongest feeling she had when he was dying was a fierce inward whisper of exultant joy that she was herself again." Also clearly a very advanced egoist. This lady takes a trip down the fiord, and lands on an island where she finds a man lying on his back sleeping. When he wakes up, and she, in her turn, has fainted and been restored, he expounds life to her. "Truth," he says, "doesn't wear a fig-leaf":—

Shall I tell you what I see? A great crowd of human beings. Take all these men—male and female—fashion them into one colossal man, study him, and what will you find in him? Tainted blood; a brain with the parasites of a thousand systems sucking at its base and warping it; a heart robbed of all healthy feelings by false conceptions, bad conscience, and a futile code of morality—a code that makes the natural workings of sex a vile thing to be ashamed of; the healthy delight in the cultivation of one's body as the beautiful perfect sheath of one's soul and spirit, with no shame in any part

of it, all alike being clean, a sin of the flesh, a carnal conception to be opposed by asceticism. A code that has thrown man out of balance and made sexual love play far too prominent a part in life—it ought to be one note, not even a dominant note, in the chord of human love—a code that demands the sacrifice of thousands of female victims as the price of its maintenance, that has filled the universe with an unclean conception of things, a prurient idea of purity—making man a great sick man.

This is their first conversation, be it noted ; they have met for the first time, been in each other's presence only a few minutes, when the man must needs go straight for the sex question, and propound the great sex paradox, which in Oscar Wilde language is merely this, that there is nothing immoral but the moral. For strip this passage of its sophistries and its verbiage and it has no other meaning than this, that the sexual relation is rendered impure by the attempt to regulate it through marriage, that marriage and nothing else is the cause of prostitution, and that if you abolish marriage and cease to call it prostitution you will get rid of the "carnal conception, the "prurient idea," and the whole evil. If it doesn't mean this, there is no point in making the "code of morality" responsible for the trouble, and that it does mean this is proved by the sequel wherein the woman, "not being willing to go into old-fashioned bondage," concludes a terminable contract with the man, he to be free to depart if he should tire, or if "his fancy should waver, and if he should seek new eyes and new lips" :—

"You will be free to go."

"Free man?"

"Free man"—with pride—"and free woman!"

"And what do you ask me for this?"

"Has any woman in the world a claim on you—have you any wrong to right—is there any child who has a right to call you father?"

"No, no, dear lady!"—with exultant pride—"not one."

"Discordant" Philosophy.

Why he should feel "exultant pride" we cannot conceive. For him to have a child out of wedlock would, according to the theory, have been a healthy, wholesome, and positively moral occurrence. If he may seek "new eyes and new lips" in the future, why not in the past? This, I suppose, is an atavistic lapse into

the old morality. But the whole thing is an amazing medley of confused thought. If we try to reduce it to logical sequence, it works out somehow like this: The present futile code of morality (*i.e.*, marriage and the disapprobation of irregular alliances) produces prostitution; abolish marriage, permit promiscuity, and prostitution will disappear. Thus stated (and, I think, the statement is fair), what an amazing bondage to words the whole thing is! Permit a man to woo a woman and leave her, and you will avoid prostitution. Call it by another name, and you will be rid of the thing. Or, again: it is the present code of morality which "makes the natural workings of sex a vile thing to be ashamed of," which "demands the sacrifice of thousands of female victims." Remove the present code, and, I suppose, there will be nothing to be ashamed of. Men will cease to buy the favours of women; they will keep to their terminable contracts; all obstacles, such as poverty, which prevent men and women marrying when they would, will disappear with the abolition of marriage. Remove the code "that makes the natural workings of sex a vile thing," and we shall be rid of the things which the Puritan, with his "prurient idea of purity," calls coarse, vicious, and sensual. This, surely, is the wildest parody of the Christian doctrine that "to the pure all things are pure." A Philistine, indeed, may without fear call it cant, and, like much cant, almost without meaning, if it is supposed to have any application to human nature.

Sex and Nothing but Sex.

"Sex ought to be one note, and not even a dominant note, in the chord of human love." The reader may judge for himself how far that doctrine is carried out in this book. There are six stories and, with one exception, they harp on sex problems, enter into details about sex, dissect it, probe it, analyse it, perorate about it. They tell "the truth" about the world, and the truth is that marriage consists in mating innocent girls to vicious men with the connivance of grasping and snobbish parents, that man regards woman as his prey and his slave, that he seduces her and blackmails her, that what is called morality is the cause of all immorality, that women are everywhere

groaning under this tyranny, straining to break their bonds, assert their ego, obtain their liberty. Happily the world consists still in large part of Philistines to whom this seems an absurd travesty. Marriage has its hard cases ; some men make it a tyranny for their wives, and some wives for their husbands—the latter point, I observe, is generally overlooked by the “revolting woman.” But not all men, nor most women, think always about the sex problem ; nor does a sane being find the world reduced to chaos though he or she should fail in its solution. That is only the way of the neuropathic egoist.

III.—THE “DEFIANT MAN” NOVEL.

From the “revolting woman” class of novels, a typical instance of which I discussed in my last chapter, we pass to the “defiant man” class. Here the man is bent on proving that he is all and more than all that the “revolting woman” makes him out to be, but also that he is rather proud of it. For he is merely doing as she wants to do—claiming his freedom, asserting his ego, “defying the ordinary code.” The woman makes her claim passionately; the man his cynically, loftily, and with an implied assumption that all men of the world agree with him. But the differences of statement are merely a matter of temperament; the two things are precisely alike in kind, and the counterpart of each other. Remove the woman’s rhetoric and the man’s cynicism, and you come straight upon the sex question. Both alike are governed by impulse, sentiment, sense, and even hysteria; both assert the superiority of these guides to the ordinary code of the Philistine, and the so-called morality of the “prudes.” Oddly enough, the “defiant man” regards the “revolting woman” with what he considers to be a healthy contempt. As “a man of the world,” he hates all women who make a fuss. This is very ridiculous and unintelligent of him, for he is her blood-brother in nearly all respects, and her malady and his are etiologically explained by the same causes.

The World of “the Man of the World.”

Of the “defiant man” class I take as a conspicuous example the volume of short stories lately published by Mr. G. S. Street. Here we plunge straight into another “world,” but a world which, as Mr. Street presents it, is as wholly occupied with the sex question as George Egerton’s world. It is peopled by “gentlemen” whom “you may meet in the shadiest haunts of dissipation”; who practise the “equivalent of a

morganatic marriage"; who find gambling an agreeable stimulus, and who "never did a mean thing in their lives." For they respect each other's privacy, they "never borrow without intending to repay," or betray a secret. These gentlemen accost girls at sight in the park, they have mistresses and are fickle to them, and if they have wives it is assumed that they are unfaithful to them. For marriage is a tiresome necessary relation, and the real affairs of the heart stand outside it. Sometimes the wives retaliate in kind, and place the husbands in a tiresome dilemma, for, says one of these model husbands:—

I must either divorce you and quarrel with a man with whom I am not in the least angry—he's one of my oldest friends, and has only acted as I have acted many a time—or I must put myself in the ridiculous position of the forgiving husband, and allow him to laugh at me. Think! I must either quarrel with a man who was my chum at school, or appear absurd to him. See what you women do.

Such are the characters in the foreground. In the background we have a general impression of lights-o'-love and chorus-girls, who are hunted by all and captured by the richest. The hardships inflicted on the poor man in this competition are specially pointed out.

"Exquisite Art."

This is a book of twenty-one stories, most of which illustrate, and all of which assume, this code of morality. That there is a world where things are so, that it has been and may be legitimately treated in fiction, are points which I in no way desire to dispute. I merely want to show the pervasiveness of the "sleeve-worn sex." Here is a writer who in a short book gives himself twenty-one separate opportunities of illustrating life from different points of view; yet he cannot get away from that single aspect, he has apparently no conceptions of any other world, and if he has a conception of any other code of conduct he goes out of his way to flaunt it. Yet I have heard this book praised for its "exquisite art" and its "astonishing knowledge of life."

Suggestion in Stones and Sex in Everything.

The art and the knowledge consist in describing the world as peopled exclusively by licentious men and faded women, whose life is a round of intrigues, betrayals, and "irregular connexions," who have

no thoughts, interests, occupations, friendships, or pleasures except such as are involved in one particular relation between the sexes. Every "man of the world" is supposed to share this view, and the writing is generally in the manner of the precocious school-boy who desires to impress you with his knowledge of this wicked world. A Philistine could laugh at a great deal of it, were it not for a certain nasty quality which comes of mixing this man-of-the-world, French-novel business with that morbid analysis of sex already noticed in the new fiction. The sex idea possesses Mr. Street; he discovers it even in inanimate things. The sight of Mayfair in twilight brings back to him "an indefinable romance, a suggestion of Georgian days and distinct sexes," which is sheer nonsense in itself, except that it introduces (quite irrelevantly) the decadent note.

"I'm a Horrid Cad."

But the worst offence of this kind is in the story called "The Reclaiming of a Reprobat." We are introduced here to a young Guardsman (Henry) living with his wife (Eleanor) and his sister (Grace). Their chief visitor is a friend and cousin of Henry's (Jack), of whom it is said that "he did nothing but hurry about between London and Paris, giving supper-parties and making jokes," and that "he was morbidly artistic, and revelled in the humours of British morality." Jack, being Henry's friend, naturally pays court to Henry's wife, and on the evening in question, Henry being detained with his regiment, is going to take her alone to a new place to dine at—"quite disreputable, he says." The sister-in-law, Grace, ventures humbly to remonstrate, whereupon this conversation ensues:—

ELEANOR : Now, I don't know why, I am inclined to say something very plain to you. You will loathe me for it, but it is good sometimes to go to the root of things. I like Jack more than I can say. He is the dearest boy in the world, and always understands me. But I love Henry !

GRACE : My dear ! I beg ——

ELEANOR : Wait. Listen, and you'll hate me. But you won't understand. Jack appeals to all there is good in me—all that is fine and artistic and intellectual. My love for Henry is merely sensual.

Grace gave a little exclamation.

ELEANOR : Yes, it is. I don't—never mind. It is simply because he is handsome and big and strong. Oh, I wish I were dead.

That is Scene I. ; in Scene II. we are introduced to Jack, who comes in to make love to Grace. "She looked at him with cold impudence. Jack's lustreless eyes gleamed for a moment, and his sensual mouth twitched." Notwithstanding that "he had been intimate with a thousand-and-one women, and had one of the worst reputations in Europe," he easily persuades the prudish Grace to accept him. That is Scene II., and it is thoroughly nasty. Scene III. is an explanation between Jack and Eleanor :—

JACK : "Well, Nell, you've often known things about me, and not been insulted. You know my nature. You remember last year in Paris? You are my friend ; worth all the rest of the world put together to me. Other women—you understand. Accident makes the consequences of this very different, but really it is just the same."

ELEANOR : "My husband's sister, Jack?"

JACK : "Bah ! I know myself, Nell. She will always be treated as though she were the only woman in the world, but the attraction is simply sensual."

ELEANOR : "Oh, Jack, I was the humbug then ; of course I knew it. I don't suppose she understands what she did, but I can see. Our British morality, Jack ! Isn't it curious? You know it's the same, conversely, with Henry and me. Isn't it strange? People look upon you and me as at best two worthless butterflies, and at worst a sort of Roman Empire people. They think our intimacy at best eccentric, and at worst criminal. Henry and Grace are two rigid, virtuous, conventional people. And I am married to Henry, and you are going to marry Grace—just because of what is animal in us. And we are friends in everything that is more than that."

I am obliged to quote this story to show my meaning, but if any Philistine can read it without a rising gorge and a growing disgust, he deserves never to read any healthy literature again. Here is a revolting situation decked out with a show of literary antithesis. A cad and a scoundrel proposes to a "virtuous and conventional" woman, and being accepted by her, goes straightway and explains to her sister-in-law that his feelings towards his *fiancée* are in all essentials the same as to any woman of the street. ("The attraction is simply sensual." "Other women—you understand. Accident (*i.e.*, marriage) makes the consequences of this very different, but really it is just the same.") The sister-in-law, instead of showing him the door, reciprocates this burst of confidence by declaring that her relations with her husband are

precisely of the same kind. Having thus analysed their disgusting natures, they pledge friendship to each other, and agree to treat the situation as one of "life's little ironies":

"I'm a horrid cad, Nell, and I wish I were dead."

"It's an odd world, Jack."

"It's the damndest world I ever saw, Nell."

That he *is* a horrid cad, and that the whole thing is grotesque, is, I should hope, obvious. A Philistine notes with regret that the penalty of "booting out" appears to have disappeared in the new fiction. In this world a "gentleman" can apparently commit any conceivable offence against taste and manners—I say nothing about morals—without incurring any risk of being booted out.

IV.—THE MORBID AND LURID CLASSES.

I pass now to a third class, which consists of the purely, or impurely, morbid. Here we have the "sex on the sleeve" combined with diseases—whether ashamed or unashamed is not of much consequence to the reader, for the effect is much the same. Of this class a leading example is a volume of the Pioneer Series, entitled "An Altar of Earth."

A Study in Morbidity.

This is a book which—to do it justice—is not offensive in statement or in detail, but of which the idea is incredibly horrible and morbid. We are introduced to a young girl who is suffering from a fatal disease which must end her life in two years. She goes into the country with a friend, and there comes across a speculative builder—a coarse, vulgar, sensual man—who, in pursuance of certain schemes, is about to destroy and build over a beautiful piece of woodland scenery. The girl, who has a passion for humanity and social schemes, is possessed with the idea of saving this wood and preserving it to the people for ever. The builder has a wife of whom he has grown tired, and he conceives a passion for this girl. She regards him with the utmost aversion, and at first repulses him with scorn. Then the thought comes to her that by sacrificing herself on this "altar of earth" she may save the land for the people. So she states her terms, and the man closing with them, she goes to the sacrifice in loathing and terror, and shortly afterwards dies of her malady. When she had told him that she must die, he had simply treated the tale as a ruse for her escape, and insisted on his bargain. So Hiram's Wood is saved to the people for ever.

Now, the author of this book—he or she, I don't know which—tells this story apparently with a full conviction that it is deeply

pathetic. The lady is young, pure, and gentle ; she is filled with beautiful enthusiasms ; the coarser and viler the man, the greater is her noble sacrifice. That he had a wife living and that she had any duty to the wife does not, of course, occur to her any more than that the object of saving one wood for a few villagers who were apparently surrounded with woods was, at best, trivial. To the normal reader, indeed, this story can only make sense on one supposition—viz., that the unfortunate woman was suffering mentally from the effects of her disease. On no other theory can we regard the idea of this woman parleying for one moment with that man as other than outrageous and absurd. The story, then, is at best a study in disease which, if true, might legitimately find place in a medical work, and if not true, is without excuse as fiction. How anyone could have conceived such an idea, and, having conceived it, deliberately sit down and write it out as a novel, passes the comprehension of a Philistine. From the point of view of fiction, it is not pathetic but simply revolting.

The English School of Diabolists.

I pass now to the fourth class, that of the lurid and nonsensical. These, I take it, are written under the inspiration of the French school of Diabolists. That school, as the reader knows, is possessed with ideas of black magic, spirits of evil, devils become incarnate, and numerous other nightmares of corruption. You are introduced to modern alchemists who use Latin incantations, pour mysterious fluids out of green phials, and by the black arts transform men into monsters, or penetrate the corrupt mysteries of their being. Several English imitations of this school have come into my hands recently, but the wildest is, perhaps, Mr. Machen's "Great God Pan," published in the Keynotes Series. Here we have a physician who practises the black art, and by an operation on the brain releases for the time being the spirit of a woman, that she may visit the spirit world and "see the Great God Pan." She awakes, a lunatic "convulsed with an unknowable terror." Shortly afterwards she has a child whom we gather from certain lurid hints to be a she-devil incarnate. "When the House of Life is thrown open there may enter in that

for which we have no name, and human flesh may become the veil of a horror one dare not express." [That is Mr. Machen's favourite style. The unnameable, the unknowable, the inexpressible, and the unmentionable have a nameless fascination for him.] When a child she meets unnameable monsters in the woods, and another child who is her companion goes into indescribable convulsions. Being a lady of unimaginable fascinations, she quickly marries, and on the night of her wedding begins talking to her husband of unwhisperable things ["things which even now I would not dare whisper in blackest night, though I stood in the midst of a wilderness"]. She robs and ruins her husband, and inspires him with inconceivable horrors ["I tell you, you can have no conception of what I know; no, not in your most fantastic, hideous dreams can you have imaged forth the faintest shadow of what I have heard—and seen"]. After committing various unnameable villainies in remote parts of the world she turns up again in London, meets her husband, murders him, and causes an unintelligible sequence of suicides in high life. She gives entertainments to her victims which few survive; but one who did survive wrote an account which makes men sick at heart, turns their lips white, and sends a cold sweat pouring like water down their temples. The account contains suggestions of forces which "cannot be named, cannot be spoken, cannot be imagined except under a veil and a symbol . . . the terror that may dwell in the secret place of life, manifested under human flesh; that which is without form taking to itself a form. . . . How is it that the very sunlight does not turn to blackness before this thing, the hard earth melt and boil beneath such a burden?" Then the loathsome creature herself commits suicide, and a doctor who was present describes the scene in an orgy of nonsensical language. "Horror and revolting nausea rose within him, an odour of corruption choked his breath," as he saw "that which was on the bed, lying there black like ink" gradually dissolve itself into a nasty jelly, the "form wavering from sex to sex, dividing itself from itself and then again reunited." Then he saw "the body descend to the beasts whence it ascended, and that which was on the heights go down to the depths, even to

the abyss of all being." Finally, in a black atmosphere, which was not dark, yet the negation of light, he sees an indescribable form the "symbol of which may be seen in ancient sculptures and in paintings which survived beneath the lava . . . too foul to be spoken of . . . as a horrible and unspeakable shape, neither man nor beast, was changed into human form; there came finally death." At this point the doctor loses control of grammar and sense as well as language.

Sex-Mania Incoherent.

The wild absurdity of all this really makes comment superfluous. But note the sex-mania in it all. It is an incoherent nightmare of sex and the supposed horrible mysteries behind it, such as might conceivably possess a man who was given to a morbid brooding over these matters, but which would soon lead to insanity if unrestrained. I imagine, however, that Mr. Machen's desire has simply been to emulate certain French practitioners in this line; indeed, the fact that he is so often reduced to gasping negatives proves that he has not made it clear even to himself what he is after. His work is innocuous from its absurdity, but the type is most truly decadent. Sex-mania has in all ages revelled in the thought of the imaginary inarticulate horrors in the "abysses of being."

The Philosophy of Sex-Mania.

Mr. Machen, no doubt, would tell us that his book was a kind of allegory, but others are quite seriously at work constructing a decadent and mystical philosophy of human nature. While I have been writing these articles, there has come into my hands a book of translations from the fantastic Swede Ola Hansson, by "George Egerton," with a remarkable preface appended to it. Hansson, we learn from George Egerton, "has broken new ground in literature, that of physiological mysticism," and in his novel bearing the suggestively decadent title of "Amorosa Sensitiva" he has plumbed greater depths of "physiological mysticism" than any of his predecessors. The book in question gives the "psycho-physiological key" to all his subsequent work. Finally, Hansson is an exponent of Friedrich Nietzsche's "triumphant doctrine of the ego," he is "one of the most striking

literary phenomena of the age—he is the incarnation of the nervous life of to-day. He is a specialist in psychology, a pathological hunter in the *terra incognita* of the human soul; laying bare hidden places with the sure, deft touch of a skilled surgeon." He has, of course, "been absolutely true to the principles of his art" (a Philistine thinks he knows what that means). Most of his work is suffused with "erotic mysticism." I know nothing of Ola Hansson, and this description does not tempt me to make his closer acquaintance, but the passage above quoted seems to me extraordinarily interesting as showing the structure of thought and pseudo-philosophy which underlies the "revolting woman" novel. The writer, it will be seen, is possessed with the thought of "psycho-physiological" mysteries and erotic mysticism"; she talks of the decadent Nietzsche's "triumphant doctrine of the ego," she speaks with admiration of this "pathological hunter in the *terra incognita* of the human soul"; she finds him to be an incarnation of nerves, and is proportionately delighted. Surely nothing could better expose the thoroughly morbid state of mind which underlies the Keynote novel. In Sweden, it seems, this surgeon of the corrupt soul—Ola Hansson—has failed to find appreciation. In this country, I have no doubt, he will be applauded by all the critical pack as a beautifully "brave" and "consummate artist."

V.—RECAPITULATION.

In order to keep these articles within any reasonable compass, I have been compelled to confine my critical analyses within very brief compass. It has been pointed out to me that I do the writers whom I have mentioned an injustice by singling them out from a numerous company which includes others more deserving of censure. To this I can only reply that the necessities of the case compel me to employ the sample method; and to make it as little unfair as possible I have limited my choice to books which are still—so to speak—hot from the press. Moreover, I am less concerned to censure any particular author than to find occasion for saying certain things which we Philistines particularly want to say, and which can be applied by the reader himself, if he chooses, to any similar literature which may come his way.

A Word on "The Woman Who Did."

I am also asked why I have said nothing about Mr. Grant Allen's "The Woman Who Did," and other works which advocate the reconstruction of society by the abolition of marriage. So far as Mr. Grant Allen is concerned, the question enables me to say that I have not the smallest desire to prevent the expression of any conscientious views which anyone may hold on such questions; and though personally I think the choice of fiction as a vehicle unfortunate, I fail to find anything to which exception can justly be taken in Mr. Grant Allen's manner of putting his case. "The Woman Who Did" is throughout decorous and free from coarseness. There is in it none of that morbid analysis which is the special mark of sex-mania. "The Philistine" need hardly add that he is in total disagreement with Mr. Allen's conclusions. He has already indicated his views on this matter in the second article of this series, *à propos* of George Egerton's "Discords."

But there is all the difference in the world between a serious proposition for the reconstruction of society put out with gravity as expressing the author's profoundest convictions, and these probings of the problem of sex which characterise the new fiction.

The Pretensions of the Sex-Maniacs.

For the situation, as it appears to "The Philistine," is briefly this. A claim is being put forward that no novels are to be considered as "true to life," as "art," as really "*written*," to use the last slang phrase, or as worthy of serious consideration, except those which explore a particular relation between man and woman in its irregular or morbid manifestations; which see everything in the world as a mood of sex; which, as we Philistines should say, abound in coarse details and assume that current morality is a thing for the *bourgeois* and unenlightened. Everything else is old-fashioned and of no account. According to the same theory, the gratification of natural impulses, without regard to ties legal, social, or domestic, is the business of all men and women under the sun. If the obstacle is a husband, he should not be there; if it is the family, that is a *bourgeois* arrangement; if it is what some men call conscience, that is a mere superstition. Any man or woman—especially woman—who fails to gratify her instincts, or desires another kind of gratification, is entitled to break loose, and, failing that, is justified in assailing the entire universe and the order of the world. The idea of submitting to any discipline because it is required by society as a whole, or of finding consolation in the non-sexual occupations and pleasures of life, apparently occurs to no one. The "triumphant doctrine of the ego"—to use the phrase which George Egerton borrows from the German decadent, Nietzsche—rejects all such old-fashioned submission with scorn.

The Abdication of the Critics.

Such, we are told, is life, art, and truth, as understood by modern and progressive thought. And what disquiets a Philistine is, that it is apparently coming to be seriously accepted by respectable critics. There were a few protests at first, but as the

doctrine infected novel after novel, and as the exponents of it had unusual opportunities of being vocal in the Press, the old-fashioned critics (anxious, as I have suggested, to be thought appreciative and up-to-date) simply gave in, and joined the chorus of praise at the astonishing cleverness of these new performers. You may now see the most advanced sexual fiction advertised with a string of glowing eulogies from the most respectable papers. The Philistine, therefore, finds his citadel betrayed. He reads with amazement that a book which seems to him unusually disgusting is pronounced on unimpeachable authority to be "exquisite" and "dainty." Here is a positive invitation to every writer of fiction to go and do likewise, as well as a guarantee of immunity for those who are tempted by the market value which attaches to an outrage on good taste. "The Philistine" observes, also, that the writing which seems to him to be indecent is almost invariably declared to be art, while that from which the element of indecency is absent is apt to be dismissed as indifferent hack-work. Under these circumstances, it seems to me high time that the Philistine should speak up for himself, and examine some of these propositions. I therefore propose to examine the new fiction very briefly (1) as art, (2) as life, (3) as modern or progressive.

Is Sex Mania "Art"?

I. *Is it Art?*—A Philistine has always a wholesome suspicion when he is told that a thing which is repugnant to ordinary taste is "Art." He knows the extraordinary capacity of the artistic temperament for persuading itself that the morbid or abnormal is high art. I myself have heard a painter say that a Gorgonzola cheese in a certain state of decay appeared to him as the most subtle and beautiful combination of colour in the world. In the present case it is urged that art has nothing to do with morality. There is a certain limited meaning which may attach to this expression, but the meaning which it seems generally to convey to the people who use it is that art has a preference for the immoral. For these so-called works of art are, as I have shown, not merely indifferent to morals, but almost invariably hostile to what is ordinarily called morality. So much so is this the case, that a judicious reader of current reviews

might infer with reasonable certainty that the novel which is praised in certain quarters for its "art" has a special eminence in nastiness. But whether it is "art" depends also in some measure upon the next question :

Is Sex Mania "Life" ?

II. *Is it Life ?*—Upon this question I have tried to give the reader some material for forming his own conclusions. The "defiant man's" view of life seems to me to differ hardly at all from that of precocious schoolboys who imagine that they know all about this wicked world. We have all met these schoolboys, and a very disagreeable type they are. In their superior wisdom they pity your green and innocent disposition, if you think that anybody does more than pretend to be moral, or has what Philistines call a "character" to lose. They "know all about it," they have long ago outgrown all illusions on this matter. The "defiant man's" assumption is precisely of this kind. He doesn't argue about it ; he just takes for granted that the world is *his* world—a place inhabited by dissipated men and loose women, faithless husbands and intriguing wives. The business of these people is to "pursue pleasure," and their diet seems to consist mainly of brandy-and-soda by day, oysters and champagne by night. This naturally makes them anæmic and liable to headaches. They have no occupation, and nothing apparently to do except think about women. They are mostly without a sense of humour, and their manners are atrocious. Children they consider a nuisance, and from their conversation they appear never to have gone beyond a few streets in the West End of London. I will not argue the question whether this is "life." There are people, no doubt, who live thus for a small fraction of their lives ; but not a great number at any given time. The reason is simple, and it is that after a certain time, shorter or longer, as their constitutions may be, they must either come out of it or die. "Life" it may be, but ~~it~~ is also "death" to ordinarily-constituted human beings.

I do not wish to be more dogmatic about the "revolting woman's conception of life," but it is open to similar objections. It represents life as one monotonous problem of sex, from which there is neither

escape nor diversion. Every situation is pervaded with sex, the world itself is penetrated with "erotic mysticism." The exponents of this view of life are "surgeons who lay bare the hidden places," or "pathological hunters in the *terra incognita* of the human soul." They interpret human action by "psycho-physiological keys"—which is a grand and nonsensical way of saying that they peck at and probe and analyse the sexual nature. It is surely sufficient to say that life does not present itself thus to any normal human being. The most sensual man or woman has a hundred places of escape from the question of sex. I observe that most of the men and women in these books are represented as idle and rich, which, I think, is rather significant. But most people are not idle and rich: they have their bread to win, their families to keep, professions to follow, businesses to pursue, and a thousand-and-one ordinary relations with other men and women in which the most lurid imagination could not espy the question of sex. Nature, art, literature, sport, friendship, hospitality, travel, politics, philanthropy—all these go to make life. The man-and-woman literature either excludes these things or treats them as incidentals to its interminable sex question. And—not least of its offences—it sees life almost entirely without humour, for the "defiant man" laughs sourly, and the "revolting woman" hysterically. To a Philistine, then, the new fiction is not life, but a morbid abstraction from it. And since it excludes most ordinary motives and enormously exaggerates one, its knowledge of human nature is very imperfect, and its boasted psychology often very absurd.

Is Sex Mania "Modern"?

III. *Is it Modern?*—The claim for the new fiction that it is in any sense "modern" or "advanced" is one that puzzles a Philistine exceedingly. Its theory of life is, apparently, that everyone has a sacred duty to yield to their impulses, whatever inconveniences and upheavals may result to other people in consequence. They must obey the "ruling passions" and defy all laws, rules, conventions, or supposed moralities which dictate any other course. This is called "being true to themselves"—the "triumphant doctrine of the ego." Holding this view, they naturally

"wear their sexes on their sleeves," become proud of their passions, and talk about them incessantly, without reserve or shame. Now this, I should have thought, instead of indicating an advance towards "modernity" and civilisation, was rather like a relapse into savagery. Not savagery, perhaps, for savages are rather reticent, but a sort of Rousseauism or return to the infancy of the world. For it sets up the natural and animal man against the civilised and cultivated man, and it repudiates the discipline upon which civilised society is built. In any case, this kind of relapse is in no sense modern. There is not a doctrine to be found in the new sex literature which has not already been exploited by some ancient or mediæval decadent, and there is hardly one which has not been practised on a large scale at some period or other of the world's history, with results that are well worth studying. From this point of view I think some of our modern decadents might do much worse than study the later periods of the Italian Renaissance.

An Appeal to my Fellow "Philistines."

I do not suppose that in anything I have said here I shall have made the smallest impression upon any devotee of the new fiction. On the contrary, I despair of saying anything in which most of them do not absolutely take pride and pleasure. "The Philistine," as a correspondent points out to me, is in this respect in a very awkward dilemma. For the "Martyr to Art" positively revels in his martyrdom, and his case is such that you can only attack him in terms which increase his vogue with a certain section of the public. So well is this appreciated by certain publishers that they are now in the habit of selecting the darkest expressions of disapproval from an unfavourable notice of a book, and deliberately printing it in their next advertisements. Thus, if a reviewer says that a book is "loathsome," "nasty," or even "unwholesome," he may count on seeing that opinion set out in a prominent place among the notices which commend that book to the attention of the reader. How, in that case, asks my correspondent, is the critic to act? Is he to keep silence and simply abdicate, or is he to run the risk of increasing the vogue of a book which he may positively detest?

My own view is that he had better run the risk and make his protest. For if no one speaks up on the Philistine side, there will be immunity for any author who likes to commit any outrage upon good taste, and the impression will go abroad that these things are accepted unchallenged as "art" and literature. That will be profoundly untrue as regards the bulk of the public, and it will be seriously unjust to those authors and publishers who do not practise in this line. My hope, therefore, in writing these articles is that I may encourage some of my brother Philistines to pluck up heart and say what they really think about much of this literature. For the worst feature of the case is, as I have said before, that critics of repute and respectable newspapers have, from a morbid anxiety to appear up-to-date, been drawn into praising, or at least countenancing, these "works of art." If on this side there is no corrective, and if on the other there is a band of critics, themselves often practitioners in the "new fiction," bent on booming it in every quarter to which they have access, then we cannot complain if the nuisance overruns all literature. The "defiant man" and "the revolting woman" have their liberty of speech, and it is time that we should claim ours, even though we risk a reputation for enlightenment with the emancipated youth of both sexes.

SEX-MANIA AND THE NEW WOMAN.

VARIOUS VIEWS ON THE PROTEST OF "THE PHILISTINE."

IN DEFENCE OF THE AUTHORS BY THEMSELVES AND OTHERS.

The following letters and other contributions appeared in THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE after the publication of "The Philistine's" articles on "The New Fiction":—

FROM MR. ARTHUR MACHEN.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—As a student of literature I should like to express my admiration of "The Philistine's" remarks as to seriousness in fiction in his concluding article. In an age like the present, when one may stand before a picture and hear those present asking, not "What moral lesson does this picture teach?" but merely "Is it well painted?" some such protest as that which "The Philistine" has made is greatly needed.

But surely these remarks of his, good as they are, are not to be restricted to the literature of our own days. Not long ago I saw a child—a young girl—battening on a book called "The History of Jack the Giant Killer." I took it away at once, and gave the child "Robert Elsmere" and "The Woman Who Did," and proceeded to examine the work she had been reading. At first I was inclined to think that the anonymous author of "Jack" had no conscientious views whatever, the absurdity and

nonsensicality of the various incidents being outrageous; but on careful consideration I believe the work to have been written by a victim of megalomania.

, Again, I cannot discover that Robert Burns or Sir Walter Scott wrote with any serious purpose ; in the works of the former, indeed, there is a distinct spirit of levity, and the author expresses sentiments which seem radically at variance with the great temperance movement. To turn to a greater author, whose works, I believe, are still to be found on the shelves of our free libraries, I have always thought "Hamlet" and "King Lear" most morbid productions. "The morbid analysis which is the special mark of *sex-mania*" seems to me rampant in the former play, and in both there is surely something lurid and unwholesome. This dwelling on madness and its dire effects, these riotings of the conscience, the murders of "Hamlet" and the murders and mutilations of "King Lear," cannot but be demoralising.

To take a more modern instance : Samuel Pickwick, the hero of a singular work called "The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club," does indeed drink too much cold punch, but, so far as we can see, without any sense of gravity or profound conviction. His consequent drunkenness is therefore morbid and revolting in the highest degree, whereas it might have been made edifying and profitable to the reader if Mr. Dickens, the author, had only seriously put forth his opinion that society should be reconstructed on the basis of drinking too much cold punch.—Your obedient servant,

36, Great Russell-street, W.C., March 9.

ARTHUR MACHEN.

FROM MR. G. S. STREET.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—I do not wish to be allowed to argue in your columns with "The Philistine," whose very readable "slashing" of a little book of mine has just reached me. But I should like to suggest that he has made two mistakes, which are of wider interest than my own offences. He says I "describe the world as

peopled exclusively by licentious men and faded women, whose life is a round of intrigues," and so forth. It was untrue to say that my book was made up entirely of such people, but that is a valueless detail. What I wish to point out is the folly of supposing that a writer of a book of short stories "describes the world" at all. If, for the sake of coherence of motive, one chooses to make the majority of a set of sketches deal with one class of emotions, one does not therefore imagine that these emotions are the whole of life. The second mistake is the implication that the opinions expressed by the characters in a book are those of its author. I should have thought these mistakes might have been avoided by this time, but I venture to indicate them, because, while I think "The Philistine's" exposition of my own poor book as accurate as it is polite, I sympathise very much with the general purpose of his protest.—Your obedient servant,

3, St. James's-place, S.W., March 8.

G. S. STREET.

SYMPATHETIC.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE

DEAR SIR,—My sympathies are so strongly with the writer of the articles on "Sex Mania" now appearing in THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE that I beg to offer you the enclosed verses, in which I have tried to express what I venture to think is still, and will always remain, the prevailing attitude of men towards women.—Faithfully yours,

ALFRED HAYES.

4, Charlotte-road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, March 9.

A GUARDIAN ANGEL

Ambadress from heaven to earth,
 Priestess of all things pure and good,
 The meekness of whose maidenhood
 To Christ doth still give birth;
 Could sickly sophistries confute
 Thine eyes' celestial eloquence,
 Weak man, the struggling slave of sense,
 Would lapse again to brute.

When passion beckons, not remorse,
Nor frown of chili philosophy,
Nor thundered code of Sinai
 Avail to bar his course.

But where the ways of men begin
To slope toward hell, an angel stands,
Whose silent lips and suppliant hands
 Persuade him more than sin.

O thou that makest Springtime sweet,
My love for thee is pure as prayer,
My kneeling soul doth hardly dare
 To kiss thy gentle feet.

Spirit of dawn, whose breath divine
Doth bid the fiends of night depart,
Accept the worship of a heart
 Whose holiest thought is thine;

Nor deem my love idolatry,
For surely if the Son of God
Yet walks the earth which once He trod,
 'Tis hand in hand with thee.

ALFRED HAYES.

A RECIPE FOR CERTAIN NEW NOVELS.

{With Respectful Compliments to "The Phillistine."}

Solve of indecency a dozen grains,
Mix them with flippant beastliness (not brains),
A quart of mental bilge-water next take
And into it some sickliest bathos shake;
Stir into this morbidity gone mad,
Much cheap agnostic jargon to it add;
Absence of moral sense best flavours it,
And lo! a dish for garbage lovers fit.

A SHORT WAY OR A BAD WAY

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—My kinsman "The Philistine"—who, for aught I know to the contrary, may be my next-door neighbour in the streets of this antique city—appears to have retired from his mission and to have desisted for a while from preaching the gospel of cleanly life and talk. Already, no doubt, his enemies are boasting themselves that, in ten days or thereabouts, they will triumph over Philistia by delivering to the world literary monstrosities more hideous than those which have gone before. Perhaps they will meet with disappointment; peradventure they will find that the shamelessness with which they are clothed, as in prehistoric times men are said to have been clothed with shame as with a garment, is no protection against the scorn of honest men who are determined to have done with them. Be that as it may, The Philistine of Westminster may feel well assured that in Gath, in Joppa, and in Ascalon there is great joy in that one of our fellow-countrymen hath smitten them hip and thigh. For we men of Philistia, men who pretend to no special saintliness of character, but do none the less observe a certain modesty and reticence of speech, who believe in purity of manhood as a choiceworthy ideal and in purity of womanhood as a thing to be revered above measure, have growled and grumbled these many months at the words which have been written and the pictures which have been printed to illustrate the innermost hearts of men not worthy and of women far less worthy of the title of humanity. We thank "The Philistine," true son of Dagon, for making our muttered complaint articulate.

But we are a very practical people. It is not enough for us that a man of sound and wholesome judgment should take up his parable, and prove to demonstration that the latter-day Decadents are no true men and no true women: should show, in such convincing fashion that no man can doubt him, that they are insidious corrupters of youth. Such proof, such scathing exposure, can be effectual only when its subjects are capable of common shame. But when the signification of words as applied to things is changed, a calamity happens not only in times of civil revolution, but in times of moral disturbance only; when he who is convicted of that which is shameful is reckoned glorious among his fellows in shame, there is need for one who will take his fan in hand and thoroughly purge his floor. In short, we are compelled to consider what

can be done to prevent men and women from producing, or to punish them for producing, books harmless and even pleasant to look upon, which are not fit to be admitted into any decent household: which, once admitted, must do definite and actual harm. For these books are pitch; no man or woman can touch them without carrying away defilement. Nor is it any answer to say that those who do not like them need not read them, for the simple reason that nobody can know what is inside a book until he has read it. And the mind of a man is not like a child's slate; you can in no wise wipe off from it the impression of nastiness left by an "Earl Lavender" or a "Theodora."

Some of my friends in Gath, rough-and-ready men, hardy of limb and stern of mind, who fight through life as best they may, hold that, as we have an examiner of stage-plays, so we might have an examiner of books. But I remind them that the last examiner of plays is dead, upon which they say, "Judging by the moral quality of some which he permitted, it is no wonder that those which were forbidden killed the poor man outright"; and I remind them also that the books which are written are as the sands of the sea in number, so that no State could afford to maintain an army of scholars sufficient to read them. Then they turn upon me, saying, "What is the law?" And I look to the book, even unto Archbold, who knoweth all things concerning the way of bringing sinners to justice, and I read unto them the passage ordaining that the publication of a book, obscene in the whole or in part, is a misdemeanour, punishable at law. Then say they, "What means this word 'obscene' precisely?" I answer that Johnson, the great doctor, defines it to mean "immodest: not agreeable to chastity of mind; causing lewd ideas." And that, beyond any doubt, is precisely the definition applicable to many of the evil works of the Decadents. In fact, Philistia stands in need of no new law to cleanse her streets of these lewd sorcerers and masters in the Art Magic of Words. The man is there; it is in the hands of the Public Prosecutor, and a turn of his wrist would purge our floor. Nor need he fear to make martyrs; for to the making of a martyr a backbone is necessary; and in Decadence is no backbone at all.—I am, &c.,

March 10.

A MAN OF GATH.

A REPLY TO THE "MAN OF GATH."

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—I have already contributed my note to this controversy, and I should not add another syllable if you had not published in your columns

the letter which bears the signature of the "Man of Gath." If the writer is serious, which I almost doubt, he proposes to restore the spirit of the Dark Ages, and to apply to Literature the falsest and foulest of all remedies, that of suppression and persecution. Surely we have been shamed and humiliated enough in the past, without this fresh appeal, in the columns of a Liberal journal, to the ignorance of the cowardly, the prurient, and the superstitious? Surely the censorship has wrought enough evil to our unhappy Drama, without the barbarous prospect of its intrusion into other departments of English Art? The spirit which yearns to burke any honest utterance, however unpleasant and inexpedient, would have shorn English literature of some of its greatest glories, would have expurgated Shakespeare and Chaucer, and silenced Byron and Robert Burns. There is, indeed, scarcely a classic in the language which could not, from one point of view or another, be pronounced "obscene." I should like, nevertheless, for the sake of Liberty, to see the "Man of Gath's" threat carried into action as an experiment. It would soon be discovered, I think, that even the Decadent had a backbone, and that, in claiming the right to utter the truth as it appears to him, he possessed the sympathy of all sane-thinking men.—I am, &c.,

March 12.

ROBERT BUCHANAN.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—May I crave space in your valuable columns to whisper in the ears of "A Man of Gath," and his auxiliaries in Joppa and Ascalon, that if they indeed wish to purge the floor, they themselves can wield the fan? So shall a grateful world be able to test their vigour of wrist and suppleness of cerebral tissue.

Lord Campbell's Act is a stiletto ready to the hand of every true son of Dagon, and were I of that noble race, loth should I be to depute the attempted murder of honest literary and other workers in intellectual fields to the half-hearted and perfunctory efforts of a cultured Public Prosecutor.

I invite "A Man of Gath" to come into the open, and, backed by his friends, to face the shade of poor Henry Vizetelly, if he dare.

And, as he cannot war with the dead, I will assure him that the authors of such splendidly sane fiction as "Esther Waters" and "The Man of Genius," men of large hearts and brains as large, will

prove of far sterner fighting stuff than was the ill-fated publisher of the noblest contemporary French literature. The heroic light of honest enthusiasm blazing from the eyes of our younger men will never give way, without struggle *à l'outrance*, to the miserable twilight so soothing to the bleared eyes of dwellers in the plain.

Give us, and it is not too much to ask, a clear stage and *no* favour! Then shall it be clearly seen what ethical backbone sustains to-day, as it yesterday sustained and shall sustain to-morrow, the heartwrung limners of poor humanity's most sordid and pathetic tragedies. Martyrs they, in truth, by sympathy with suffering.

Smug uncleanness may hoot and hiss. When it can summon heart of grace, and, coatless, take its castigation, it shall at least lay claim to obtain respect.—I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

Petersfield, March 13.

RUDOLF BLIND.

VARIOUS VIEWS.

I.—“THE SWING OF THE PENDULUM”

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—I am, naturally, profoundly flattered that any book of mine should have furnished the text for so long and so eloquent a sermon as that preached by “The Philistine” in your columns. I may say, *en passant*, that I cordially agree with much of that gentleman's utterance. That English fiction should continue at its present pass would be most regrettable—were it possible, which I believe it is not. The sudden eruption of “sex mania,” of which your correspondent complains so bitterly, need not disquiet any philosophical lover of English fiction. It is only what is known in politics as the swing of the pendulum.

If—which I fancy is not the case—the “Philistine” were a writer of fiction, he could hardly fail to know how far the pendulum had swung to the other side. It is not from any desire for self-advertisement, but simply for the sake of employing the strongest argument ready to my hand, that I quote the case of my first novel, “A Song of Sixpence.” It was finished in June, 1889, and saw the light in January, 1893. During that interval of three years and six months it had been rejected by thirty-six publishers. What there is in the book to hurt or frighten man,

woman, or child, Heaven knows ; but the fact remains that firm after firm paid me the highest compliments regarding its literary excellence, but declined it on the ground of its "moral tendency." The late Wolcott Balestier wrote to me :—"The book is impossible, even in America." It was published at last on the strenuous appeal of my brother, Mr. Christie Murray, and I got ten pounds for it. It had taken me four months to write.

Let "The Philistine" take heart of grace. The sex element in English fiction will find its level. That it is too prominent for the moment is, no doubt, cause for regret. That it had no place at all only a year or two ago was nothing less than a national disaster and disgrace, inasmuch as its absence belittled our literature, and made it the laughing-stock of cultured Europe.—Believe me, Sir, &c.,

Prince of Wales Club, March 11.

HENRY MURRAY.

II.—SUPERFICIAL SYMPTOMS AND THE REAL MALADY.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—With your permission I should like to make one or two remarks upon the breezy articles with which "The Philistine" has been entertaining us.

The recent swarm of evil-smelling books has disturbed his peace of mind, and he retaliates with very heavy ordnance. But I venture to think he is wasting powder and shot, because he attacks some superficial symptoms of a disease, and not the malady itself. The upper middle-class is in a very pathological state, as they are the first to admit. But no amount of justly indignant rhetoric can "touch the spot," or make a change for the better.

When a man is brought to a hospital suffering from a complaint which makes him offensive to all who come near, the doctors do not gather round to ask each other solemnly, "Is this Health?" or "Is it Life?" or "Is he Art?" It is all the three gone wrong, and accordingly they say very little, but do a great deal.

So a section of the population is very far gone wrong, and certain writers have undertaken to supply us with more or less faithful descriptions of the disease. These books may be possibly useful, as are the clinical accounts which fill the weekly columns of the medical papers ; but "it would be too ridiculous to go about to prove" that they are Art or

Literature. "The Philistine" takes the writers too seriously—as he takes the disease not seriously enough.

Literature—as opposed to the mere recording "tape" which is always pouring from the Press—of the genuine sort is healthy; but the tragic absence of humour which distinguishes these books is an indication of unhealthiness: and where health is wanting there is no art worthy of the name. Of all men an artist is the healthiest; out of the fulness of his healthy views of life he expresses himself, and his work enchants us because it is tonic, Life in its entirety. An artist is an orchestra, while lesser men are more like single instruments. In this connexion it seems a doubtful excuse to say that the "short story" does not admit of artistic treatment, in the highest sense of the word. A genuine draftsman is as true to perspective in his slightest sketch as in his largest works; and Mr. Kipling's small but immortal masterpieces are evidence of this.

But I think "The Philistine" is not serious enough in regard to the disease itself, of which these odorous books are a manifestation. As he says, "Life does not present itself thus to any normal human being." Exactly so; and therefore he should deal in a more sympathetic mood with the case of those fellow-creatures of his who are in such an abnormal state. The disease is not a new one, and is extending every year in the class of society where these books are the vogue.

In that class are thousands of young Adams and Eves cut off from hope of the first necessity of life—and, in consequence, health is out of the question. Life is for each man nothing if not orchestral; but, in the orchestra of these young people's lives the leading instruments are missing. It is in vain to tell them that "there are a hundred other interests in life" than that of sex; so in an orchestra are many other instruments besides the first violins; but when these are absent, what becomes of the symphony? And again, when the indispensable is absent, how can we think of anything else? Starving children will hang about the pastrycook's shop, and till they are fed there is no other world for them. So it is useless exhorting the clarionets or horns to set to work when there is nothing to inspire with dominant melody.

I fancy most "Philistines" are comfortably married men. Like people safe and sound ashore, they fail to realise the feelings of the drowning man—and here we seem to recall some lines of Lucretius. Men on a raft have been known to do strange things, things quite unfit for publication. Still, when considering them our chief emotion is one of pity, however unpleasant the details are. But—as every "Philistine" must

know—there are thousands of men of the cultured class turned adrift from the most fundamental need of life ; and the rafts are increasing every day. But I will not go on fiddling while Rome is burning.—I am, Sir, yours,
 March 10. E. F.

III.—PHILOSOPHIC.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—Much as I sympathise with “The Philistine” in his crusade against sex mania in modern fiction, I cannot help thinking that he attaches undue importance to what is, at the worst, only a passing epidemic, and for the rest, I am inclined to accept gratefully anything in literature which thermometrises the atmospheric condition of modern society—or, perhaps I should rather say, of modern society in great cities. Surely the books produced by the numberless writers of the so-called decadence, and particularly the books produced by women, compare not unfavourably with the novels popular until lately at the circulating libraries? A book, like Miss Dowie’s “Gallia,” for example, with all its eccentricity, with all its futile attempts to enter into the mysteries of the male temperament, could never have been written by any perfervid Laura Matilda ; it is straight, honest talking on an unpleasant subject, and, in so far as it is honest, is surely valuable? The New Woman, so curious about the privacies of the great god Pan, is well worth studying ; whatever she may be, she is no longer a doll or an automaton, and even her emergence in “Yellow Books” and “Pioneer” experiments is, to my mind, a sign of progress. Why not let her alone, to work out her own salvation from the mud of sexuality? She is too eager and too clever to remain there very long, and in God’s good time she will wash herself and resume her clothing. Even as she is, she is more interesting, in my opinion, than Dora Spenslow or Laura Pendennis. Do not let us forget, moreover, that there is a serious meaning at the heart of the present development of sex-literature ; that such literature is a consequence, for the most part, of the healing up of old formulas and old superstitions. The New Woman, eager to prove her capacity for independence, for a life parallel with and equal to the life of Man, seizes the subject which lies nearest to her knowledge, that of sex, and reveals, even in her moments of

utter impropriety, something that is individual. Her madness, like that of all pure-minded Ophelias, turns innocently to things indecent, but do not let us forget that, even when she was sane and conventional, things indecent must have been well within her knowledge. It is quite right that sentimentalists should realise this—should realise that young women are things of flesh and blood, not saints in a painted window. When Ophelia recovers her reason, which she will most certainly do, she may be a little shocked at having (to put it vulgarly) let the cat out of the bag; but honest men will respect her none the less, and perhaps be interested in her a little more. Any return to her former state of superhuman innocence is now, of course, impossible. Let us be content to lose our superstitions concerning her, to accept her as she is, in all her honest and thoroughgoing nudity; and in the meantime let us welcome her pretty improprieties as a valuable revelation.—I am, &c.,

March 9.

ROBERT BUCHANAN.

A PUBLISHER IN PRAISE OF HIS AUTHORS.

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR — It is not reckoned amongst the duties of a publisher that he should defend the opinions of the authors for whom he publishes, or their methods of expressing their opinions. None the less, it seems to me impossible to pass by in silence the violent attacks that your contributor "Philistine" has made upon at least two of the authors whose books bear my imprint. George Egerton's "Discords," of which he first fell foul, doesn't pretend to be meat for intellectual babes. The author conceives herself bound to declaim against certain wrongs which have aroused her indignation, and for which she believes she sees at least the beginnings of a remedy. She casts her teaching into the form of parable, as have other missionaries before her, because she realises that as ethical tracts they would not reach the classes she aims at influencing. That her treatment of her often difficult subjects is characterised by not merely tact, but real delicacy of touch, is admitted by a very large number of people who are far from endorsing her theories. Those who stigmatise her parables as "unhealthy" or "indelicate" do so, I conclude, for the same reason that "The Philistine" reads into the first "Discord" a meaning which is neither patent nor implied. He speaks of the woman in the story having compromised

herself with one man, and the written proof of this compromising relation having come into the possession of another man, from whom, to escape exposure of the former disgrace, she accepts a new one by becoming his mistress. There is not, however, a word to convey this meaning; indeed it is rather obvious that the woman acts as a voluntary scapegoat, and had "The Philistine" been really criticising, instead of slogging, he would have simply called attention to the inconsistency of the woman, who declares that everybody should take the consequences of his or her acts, when she has so recently been bearing the burden that should have fallen on another's shoulders. But now he is determined to prove his case, and so he reads into the story a passage which does not appear in the Bodley Head edition of "Discords," but only in that circulated among Philistines and their kind.

Again, he comments on my advertisement of abusive Press notices, for although my name is not mentioned there can be no mistake as to the intention. But what would he have me do? What other means are open to me of pillorying the ignorant, the biassed, and the malicious reviewer, than to contrast publicly their utterances, and those of the writers, far outnumbering them, who express totally contrary convictions? Why should I think the reviewer in the *Liverpool Mercury* insincere when he says of "Discords" that "mothers might benefit themselves and convey help to young girls who are about to be married by the perusal of its pages"? or the reviewer in the *Weekly Scotsman* who detects "a refinement and a pathos that lift the book into a region altogether removed from the merely sensational or the merely repulsive," because the reviewer in the *Irish Independent* calls the book loathsome, and slangily says that it "makes a record in all the nasty literature which has been produced on the sex question"? And why should I be censured for adding the quotation alluded to to the Press notices of "Discords," if THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE thinks the advertisement which contains the quotation admissible to its advertisement columns?

Mr. Arthur Machen, the author of "The Great God Pan," has been subjected to hardly less violent abuse than George Egerton, but I see he has spoken somewhat for himself. On his behalf, then, I have only to say that "The Philistine," to justify his strictures on "The Great God Pan," must put in the same stocks, certainly Poe and Stevenson, probably Le Fanu, Bulwer Lytton, and Kipling.—I am, Sir, yours obediently,

The Bodley Head, Vigo-street, W., March 12.

JOHN LANE

TITLES IN THIS SERIES

- 1 E. F. Benson. *The Babe, B.A.* 1897.
- 2 A. W. Clarke. *Jasper Tristram.* 1899.
- 3 Ella D'Arcy. *Modern Instances.* 1898.
- 4 Frank Danby (Julia Frankau). *Dr. Phillips: A Maida Vale Idyll.* 1887.
- 5 R. M. Gilchrist. *The Stone Dragon and Other Tragic Romances.* 1894.
- 6 John Law (Margaret Harkness). *A City Girl.* 1887.
- 7 Henry Harland. *As It Was Written: A Jewish Musician's Story.* 1885.
- 8 Averil Beaumont (Mrs. A. W. Hunt). *Thornicroft's Model.* 1873.
- 9 George Moore. *A Modern Lover.* 1883.
- 10 W. H. Pollock. *The Picture's Secret.* 1883.
- 11 William Sharp. *The Children of Tomorrow.* 1899.
- 12 Count Stanislaus Eric Stenbock. *The Shadow of Death.* 1893.
bound with *Studies of Death.* 1894.
- 13 Arthur Symons. *Studies in Seven Arts.* 1906.
- 14 ———. *London. A Book of Aspects.* 1908.
- 15 ———. *Amoris Victimia.* 1940.
bound with *Amoris Victima.* 1897.

- 16 A. B. Walkley. *Playhouse Impressions*. 1892.
- 17 Frederick Baron Corvo (Frederick Rolfe). *The Songs of Meleager*. 1937.
- 18 Evelyn Douglas (John Barlas). *Phantasmagoria*. 1887.
bound with *Love Sonnets*. 1889.
- 19 Sebastian Evans. *Brother Fabian's Manuscript*. 1865.
- 20 George Ives. *Book of Chains*. 1897.
bound with *Eros' Throne*. 1900.
- 21 Eugene Lee-Hamilton. *Gods, Saints and Men*. 1880.
bound with *The New Medusa*. 1882.
bound with *Sonnets of the Wingless Hours*. 1894.
- 22 Charles Sayle. *Musa Consolatrix*. 1893.
- 23 Theodore Wratislaw. *Caprices*. 1893.
bound with *Orchids*. 1896.
- 24 Harry Quilter. *Is Marriage a Failure?* 1888.
- 25 The Philistine (J. A. Spender). *The New Fiction and Other Papers*. 1895.

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